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LECTURES

ON THE

HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES

OF

PAINTING.

BY

THOMAS PHILLIPS, Esq. R.A. F.R.S. & F.S.A.

LATE PROFESSOR OF PAINTING IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

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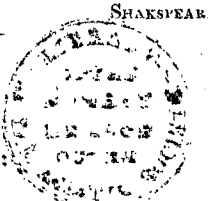
If to do were as easy as to know what 'twere good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces.

SHAKSPEARE.



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1833.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

GEORGE O'BRIEN,

EARL OF EGREMONT,

&c. &c. &c.

My Lord,

I gladly avail myself of Your Lordship's permission to dedicate the following Discourses to you.

To whom indeed could they be dedicated with more propriety!

They were written with an earnest desire to assist in promoting the knowledge of the Art of Painting in our country, and no one

has more zealously sought to effect that object than Your Lordship: no one has patronised British Art more extensively, or more kindly; or encouraged and rewarded Artists more generously.

Having enjoyed the favour and experienced the liberality of your Lordship through a period of nearly forty years, I feel both pride and pleasure in thus acknowledging the obligation you have conferred upon me, and in subscribing myself

Your Lordship's

Grateful and devoted Servant,

THOMAS PHILLIPS.

PREFACE.

Some apology may be thought necessary for my publishing Lectures on Painting; for my offering to the world reflections upon a subject which has been so skilfully treated by those intelligent men who have preceded me in the professorship of painting in the Royal Academy, and by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first great president of that honourable and useful institution. I submit to the propriety of the thought; and say, that I should certainly not have done so, had I not imagined, that, by having taken a novel course in my endeavours to fulfil the duties of the professorship, I had, in some measure, rendered my Discourses a useful appendage to those already before the students and the public.

Endeavouring to make a just estimate of the circumstances under which I had accepted the office assigned to me, I felt that, if it were not

given to me to rival the display of learning or of eloquence made by my immediate predecessors, I might, whilst I united with them in upholding the most elevated views of the art, add to their usefulness by adopting a more simple and more didactic style of composition. To this end I have directed my labours, and I flatter myself that I have added something of value to the information they have afforded; if not in exalted sentiment or in brilliant criticism, at least in arrangement and practical utility.

Here, then, is my apology:—The hope of being useful, the desire to assist in preserving pure and unadulterated the practice and the application of painting in our school of art: to preserve it in a rational and needful state of control over that wild luxury of taste, that excess of delight in the ornamental rather than in the true and essential beauties of art, which has so repeatedly been fatal to its real interest; and which certainly threatens to overwhelm it here.

The regulation of the Royal Academy, which directs its professor of painting "to instruct the students in the principles of composition; to form their taste in design and colouring; to point out the beauties and imperfections of celebrated works of art, and the particular ex-

cellencies and defects of great masters; and, finally, "to lead them into the most efficacious paths of study;" presents, it must be acknowledged, no light task to him who undertakes the office. Nor should I have aspired to it when it became vacant by the decease of Mr. Fuseli, had I not previously given much consideration to the history and the principles of the art; and been accustomed to set down my thoughts in writing, in order to supply Dr. Rees with articles on painting for his voluminous Cyclopædia: which I did from the word *Effect* (inclusive), to the end of that great work.

This had been done principally during the time that Italy was closed to us by being in possession of the French; and I had relied upon the knowledge to be gathered from copies, prints, and drawings, and the admirable lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Fuseli, for all that I could say concerning the great fresco paintings of Italy. But when I was elected to fill the honourable and important station of professor of painting in the Royal Academy, I felt that I could not rest contented with such information upon the subject. That I ought not, indeed, to rest satisfied with repeating the thoughts of others, however just I might conceive them to be; but that it would become me to see

those important productions and judge of their qualities and their value for myself; as they must of necessity form a main portion of the theme I had to discuss.

I determined, therefore, to know by personal inspection, what it was that had entitled the authors of the most renowned among them to the great honour which attaches to their names; that I might "make assurance double sure;" and be secure in the opinions I might be inclined to impart, and the argument I might think proper to adopt or employ; as far at least as my perception of the right would carry me. Accordingly I went to Italy, accompanied by a most intelligent friend and brother artist.

Actuated by congenial feelings, and unincumbered by even the slightest inclination to support exclusively any peculiar system of art, we entered upon the office of examiners guided only by an earnest desire to discover the source of that beauty in art which had so captivated and enchained the world; and on what principles its charms were founded. We carefully examined and re-examined works of different ages, from the 10th to the 17th century; and found that there were two important points relative to the art of painting of which we had previously attained but very imperfect ideas. First, we were impressed

with pleasure in beholding the propriety, indeed, I may say the perfection of feeling and understanding that mingled with the imperfections to be found in the works of the early painters; those of the 13th and 14th centuries, the period of the resuscitation of art in Italy. We saw with surprise, that the peculiar beauties of thought exhibited in those imperfect paintings had been far too lightly dwelt upon by writers on the subject; or had been touched with so little discrimination as to convey inadequate ideas of their full value: whilst in some there were exaggerated praises of the skill with which they had been wrought.* We found, also, on continued consecutive enquiry into the progress of the art towards perfection, this same feeling, extending itself through the works of all the better masters. We found it to be that, which all subsequent embellishments, added progressively to the practice of the art, were adopted to adorn, and support; and being so adorned and supported, forming in fact the foundation of the beauty most to be admired in the works of Raffaelle

* I must make an exception from these observations, in favour of the work of Mr. Ottley, entitled "THE ITALIAN SCHOOL OF DESIGN": only regretting that he did not carry the just remarks he has made, farther.

and M. Angelo: the finished ground-work of our faith in art, in all that relates to form and to expression. To these two points I would principally direct the attention of the reader, and of the student; for though the richer embellishments of the art of painting form the more commonly alluring portion of its productions, yet they are comparatively of slight value without a judicious application of them; to which form and expression most essentially contribute. Besides, the mere art and its embellishments are of too attractive a nature to be in danger of neglect; they need only to present themselves to be admired and imitated; but the wise, the useful, and correctly expressive application of them, can be maintained in estimation only by persevering care and attention.

This valuable quality to be found in the productions of long-past times was one new source of information upon the subject I had in view, which promised to be useful if well applied; and I have endeavoured to avail myself of it.

The second point to which I have alluded related to the works of M. Angelo. On these we found that the information we had obtained had afforded us but imperfect conclusions. But I must speak for myself. I found that I had misunderstood or misapplied the great encomiums

which have been bestowed on his works by men the best able to appreciate his merits, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Fuseli. The consideration of the grand style in which they are wrought had been so repeatedly and so fully impressed upon my mind, that I was not sufficiently prepared to find a still greater power exhibited in them, creating and predominating over it.

But when works of imagination approach towards perfection in their individual classes, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, so to define their peculiar excellencies by words, as to convey an adequate impression of them.

If, on the one hand, the beauty we admire arises from some high quality either of extreme delicacy or of daring boldness, when the former verges on imbecility, or the latter on bombast; how is the boundary where they stop to be described, or a just sense of it to be imparted? Those charms which captivate most surely, which retain possession of our minds most strongly and consequently most durably; which compel us to admire or venerate; which elevate us above all common impressions, and show us without excess the full influence of pathos, are too subtle for description. They are not, perhaps, and certainly not always, the most captivating at first sight. It is by degrees they win us to them-

selves, and spread their ever-growing influence over us.

A due impression of ordinary, or of very good works may be communicated; but when that degree of perfection is attained which carries the good onwards till it merits the title of the best; which conveys to the utmost the form, the expression, or the sentiment of a figure, or of a composition, it must be seen to be felt, or to be fully understood.

Hence, doubtless, it arose, that when I beheld the works of the earlier painters, of Giotto more particularly, and saw so much expression of thought and of passion under the rough garb of imperfect imitation; and in the works of Raffaelle and M. Angelo beheld the same mental power combined with the beauties of finished execution, as displayed in their paintings in the Vatican, I found that I could then more fully comprehend the force and the propriety of the remarks of others; and enjoy a strengthened confidence in my own mind, when it became my turn to speak upon the subject. I consequently felt, that in thus obtaining a qualification for myself, I might proceed satisfactorily in directing the studies of others, concerning the value of the principles observable in those great and leading productions of the pencil; and that I

could speak with certainty, and might hope to do it with authority and usefulness, in a degree which certainly I could never myself attach to the expressions of others who had not seen them.

The fine and powerful works of Raffaelle and M. Angelo are not recommended to us by the luxury of colouring, or any very striking arrangement of effect. Many persons, it is recorded, have passed through the chambers of the Vatican, and then enquired for the paintings of Raffaelle, expecting, no doubt, to see a brilliant display of the most engaging qualities of the art; a rivalry perhaps with the brilliancy and illusion of Rubens. Nevertheless, to a practised eye they are not wanting in these qualities, but their more efficient and more perfect beauties are reserved for the reflective mind.

To those of M. Angelo, these remarks most specifically apply; although they are more calculated to make an impression at first sight than Raffaelle's: a power which they owe to their singular diversity from all others which he who has been wandering through Italy in search of beautiful art has been accustomed to see.

While I have passed whole mornings in the Chapel (on the coving and ceiling of which they are painted), engaged in the admiration and study of them, and ever finding increasing grati-

fication, hundreds have passed through it after giving the pictures half an hour's attention, declaring, "they were very extraordinary paintings, and seemed very fine, but they did not understand them!" The imperfect impression thus conveyed, cannot be said to arise from any fallacy in the art they exhibit; for though not carried to the perfection of imitation seen in the works of other schools, yet they are very excellent imitations of nature to a certain extent, and are delicate and agreeable in their colouring; so that the mind is not bewildered as if mere imaginary objects were presented for its contemplation. But, excepting on the ceiling, the scene consists of scattered parts without a readily apparent union; and that being felt by the common observer who has no clue to guide him to the comprehension of the whole, he turns aside with dissatisfaction. I have repeatedly and with pleasure, noticed the admiration given to single figures among the prophets and sibyls; to their colouring, the grandeur of their forms, and the power of their expressions: still the parties would repeat the common cry, "I don't understand it." No history was depicted, no incident exhibited to which they could attach what they saw; and they were bewildered in their consideration of it; the beauty and excellence of the

art exhibited, forming but a lesser point of attraction to them.

I have often considered what could be the cause of this so common declaration concerning so wonderful a production of the ingenuity of man; and in which I, influenced only by a sense of truth, beheld so much to gratify both the eye and the mind; and have asked myself, if the art or the beholder were in fault? In answer, I could only find a justification of a remark made by Sir J. Reynolds, "that an understanding and a relish of the excellencies of refined art, are attained only by cultivation of taste, and improvement of mind in whatever relates to it." Men, in an uncultivated state, are most delighted with gaudy and glittering ornament, with bright colours, and strong or fierce display of passion: whilst those who are improved by civilisation, prefer the combination of simplicity with beauty, refined and delicate unions of colours, a polished ornamental display of sense, and deep and clear but moderated tokens of feeling: such likewise is the effect of the display of different classes of art, the higher class coming within the sphere of the latter kind of influence. Certainly, in nothing can the specific distinction of these two conditions of men be displayed more fully, than in the effects produced by the labours of art.

The fault then lies in the want of a just direction of mind being given to those who go abroad to learn to admire pictures and statues. Going to see those finished productions of imagination and of polished taste, they do it without a previous acquirement of the knowledge requisite to direct their observation beneficially; without that advancement in taste which can alone fit them for the full enjoyment of the pleasure such things are capable of affording, and they "cannot understand them." Consequently, such works are regarded merely as matters of curiosity, and not as objects deserving of the highest respect and consideration, as the rarest productions of taste and intellect.

There is an operating cause adverse to the just feeling which I wish to see excited, in that the practice of painting is diffused through many channels, practised in diversified manners, applied to low and common-place purposes, by low and vulgar minds; and too often employed as mere furniture, or in a worse manner, by many, whom few regard, and none can honour. These circumstances, which must ever operate, too commonly, but too naturally also, deprive the art of that respectful consideration generally, which in itself and in its best purposes, it merits; and men are thus made apt to regard its pro-

ductions as little more than specimens of ingenious handicraft; of skill, rather than of intellect and of invention. This thought once settled in the mind, without reflection, all classes of painting are more or less brought within its influence; and the whole being thus loosely and lowly impressed on the uninitiated, no preparation is thought necessary for the observation of its best and most perfect application.

That this should be the case, so widely extended as it is, even among the most learned in this period of learning, is the more extraordinary when it is remembered, that, the productions of the art which have led to these reflections have so long maintained preeminence by the invention and ingenuity displayed in them; are indeed alone in their peculiar perfections, and are acknowledged to be justly so regarded by competent authorities.

Hence it must appear, that those perfections could only have been the result of greater and purer intellectual power in the minds of the painters, than was given to others who have attempted to follow them.

Notwithstanding this evident demonstration of their extreme value, as well as rarity, and that consequently there must lie under their surface much worthy of investigation, they are very few

indeed, who pay them more than common regard; or who conceive that a little previous enquiry into the nature of the principles upon which such works are wrought, and the objects they were intended to illustrate, would be rewarded a thousand fold in the increase of pleasure they might enjoy on beholding them.

A desire to stimulate to this good end, or rather to aid the exertions of my predecessors, is another portion of the apology I would offer for entering the lists of authorship as a professor of the art of painting.

I am afraid that there is but small likelihood of the art being ever again applied to any great beneficial purpose, which may require the full exercise of the great principles and power exhibited in those wonderful paintings.

Though there are some in private life, who, generously actuated, are inclined to patronise ingenious artists, following the feelings, and gratifying the peculiar inclinations of their own minds; yet, if this continue to be the only system of patronage in the country, we may look in vain for any adequate means of creating a national character in art by the production of great and important historical works. Neither can our establishments of a Royal Academy and a National Gallery of Art produce any further effect, than

that of affording the youthful aspirant for fame the means of acquiring the qualifications necessary for obtaining the desired end; but, as the case now stands, destined to be employed on less important objects.

Let it be recollected to what great end the works to which I have alluded were directed, where they were performed, and under whose direction! They were wrought at the instigation of men governing at the head of a great ruling power, actuated by the necessity of maintaining that power by all that could stimulate the public mind to abstraction from worldly considerations, to devotedness to religious feeling, and to that veneration for the mysteries of religion under the influence of which the directors sought to secure submission to superior knowledge, and supposed superior sanctity.

It cannot be conceived that so many able men as were engaged in promoting this object, would give their attention, or waste the wealth of the church entrusted to their care, being moved only by the empty vanity of having an ornament added to the splendour of the temples they had erected. It was done in the expectation, founded on the susceptibility of the human heart, or rather in the certain benefit to be drawn from it, that an ample return would be

made to them, when the natural influence of the scenes represented, exciting the zeal of devotees, should also extend the influence of their system of religion; and with it that of the power they held, and were desirous to preserve. So great and so important was the end for which paintings of religious subjects, or subjects involving reflections tending to impress religious feelings were wrought; and such the men and the motives which led onwards the cultivation, and the useful application of the art through successive centuries; and stimulated others, endowed with the most brilliant genius, to devote their minds and lives to the study of it. It had the intended effect for a while; but it is past and is gone, at least with us; disappearing with the establishment of Protestantism. There can however, be no greater proof of the efficacy of painting when judiciously applied, than the apprehension, which has been repeatedly evinced, of danger to the purity of religious worship should pictures be permitted to adorn our churches.

If, then, painting, when properly directed, could stimulate, as it did, to religious feeling, may it not also aid in the admiration and love of justice, of charity, of morality, or of any other powerful and valuable impulse of the human

mind; and would it not be wise in our rulers to imitate the example which has been set them by the church, and cultivate among the people the exercise of those amiable and serviceable qualities by the use of so important an agent?

Were our halls of justice to be adorned with pictures illustrative of subjects which exemplify the power and certainty with which crime is accompanied by sorrow and misery, and sooner or later punished; or how honesty and rectitude of conduct is blessed and rewarded: Were there, in like manner, exhibited in our rooms devoted to public meetings pictures relative to the subjects usually discussed there, to the value of moral principles, or to illustrate facts whereby mankind had obtained great benefits or suffered great privations: Were our corporations and great communities to suspend in their halls, from time to time, paintings representing those circumstances which gave rise to their establishment, or of events illustrative of their object, or of their charitable and useful proceedings: Were the chambers of our palaces to be adorned with scenes commemorative of great and public important events, beneficial and honourable to the nation, such as occupy a large portion of its history, and furnish records for remote periods: were, I say, these conjoined and important influences once

set in motion for the employment of the historical painter, it can scarcely be supposed that no benefit would accrue to each and all concerned; or that much important and beneficial instruction and information could not be conveyed to the minds of the public by such means. By such a mode of proceeding, national points of interest might be created for the employment of the art, which would most effectually tend to advance its cultivation to a state of worthy and honourable rivalry with the best of other countries; and without which it must of necessity languish, and remain at a comparatively lower degree of importance.

But setting aside the possible good to be derived from such a national employment of painting, which by many is deemed problematical, and is the less required in these days, when the small craft of the press have overspread the wide ocean of literature and open to us new sources of information weekly, daily, and almost hourly; is there nothing worthy of regard in the elevation and purity given to the pleasures of society by the embellishments of taste, or in the honour and the dignity which has always accompanied the cultivation of the liberal arts!

To preserve mementos of the exalted reputation thus gained by others, we are now about

to erect a temple to their fame, a rich abode for their productions; and those productions we have purchased at a vast expense: having professedly done so with the view of promoting the growth of taste, and the knowledge of the science of art here; and deeming them worthy of such tokens of esteem.

Surely, it will be an incongruity in the judgment of those concerned in creating such a dwelling-place for art of other times and countries, should they neglect to furnish to our own artists, the means whereby alone full rivalry with it may be effected. Surely, it will involve an absurdity, if, when the governors and legislators of the country are convinced, that the successful efforts of painters, *the product of long cultivation of their art under one great public impulse,* are worthy of so rich and costly preservation; the conviction should be unaccompanied by a willingness to devote some portion of the wealth of the country at their disposal, to secure the result professedly sought for from it: viz. by the public employment of painting, on national principles and for national purposes.

Besides, the good that might ensue from its adoption would most probably not end with the public employment of artists in labours specifically directed to important ends. It is reason-

able to suppose that such honourable and useful patronage would act as a stimulus to private taste and feeling, and extend the influence of the limited zeal and liberality on which it now alone reposes;—that it would provide more widely, occupation for painters upon miscellaneous subjects; and so assist in enlarging the growth, and improving the polish of the arts. And there can be little doubt, that, if such a combined liberal and fertile field of patronage were once fairly opened for the employment of the highest branch of painting, many men of superior talent would be added to those who have already devoted their minds to the cultivation of it: men, who now, driven by the necessities of life, or very wisely considering its cares and its enjoyments, confine their attention to portraiture, to landscapes, or to subjects of common life.

This kind of call for the public encouragement of painting has been so often ineffectively pressed upon the notice of the government and of the public, that it seems a useless, because almost a hopeless task to repeat it. Yet it so naturally appertains to the subject of the following Lectures, that I should have felt like a deserter from my duty had I omitted the expression of my own opinions and feelings concerning it.

But when economy is so rigidly demanded, and is indeed of such imperious necessity in whatever relates to the proceedings of government, it is necessary to look to the means of effecting even a national object. And if what has been said may be thought worthy of regard, it is gratifying to know, that the means whereby it may be wrought lie within a very small compass, allowing time to form a portion of those means; and low indeed must be the state of the public finances if it could be at all felt as a burden. If the government would devote two or three thousand pounds annually to the purpose, placed under proper control, all that relates to the palaces, the halls of parliament, and public offices, might progressively be obtained: and if our public corporations and great communities would but set apart from five hundred to one hundred pounds per annum, according to their several sources of wealth, as a fund for the purpose, every end required of them would in like manner be answered; and they would obtain their share of the honour and the respect due to those who assist in the cultivation of the fine and liberal arts.

Though this beneficial aid never has been, and perhaps never may be given to the art of painting in our country, yet we enjoy a fair source

of national pride and satisfaction, in seeing to how great a degree of excellence it has been carried without it. The adventurous spirit and the zeal of artists themselves have done much to promote it, the strength of private patronage has been and is still administered in its behalf, and commercial speculation lends its active and useful assistance.

The former, must be dependent for its continuance upon the return it meets with from the public; it cannot go on far if unsupported; more particularly in historical painting: the risk in pursuing it is too great, and the evil in case of failure, too serious. Few of those who have made the venture, impelled by genius or by circumstances, and not having some other means of support, have succeeded in obtaining the common enjoyments of life, and some have been overwhelmed by misery.—The latter, the commercial aid, for I cannot dignify it with the title of patronage, may be safely left to take care of itself, to draw from the employment of art all the interest it can; and it well knows how to do so extensively. But those generous patrons, who find gratification in encouraging the efforts of artists, giving value to their productions and comfort and honour to themselves, merit their respect and gratitude in return; and it is in-

cumbent upon all who practise painting professionally, to endeavour by every means in their power to increase the pleasure derivable from pictures.

The knowledge of the principles upon which the finest paintings have been produced, and by which criticism may be most securely and beneficially conducted, is one of the means conducive to that end. And since such knowledge can be obtained only by experience or by instruction, I would fain hope, that the publication of the following Discourses, in which I have endeavoured to render those principles clear and familiar, may be kindly received by all who delight in pictures, and are interested in the culture and success of the art of painting.

THOMAS PHILLIPS.

ERRATA.

Page 52. line 10. for " Gentile do Fabriano " read " Gentile da Fabriano."

Page 82. line 18. for " Pinturuchio " read " Pinturicchio."

Page 215. line 4. from bottom, for " Mr. Pine " read " Mr. Penny."

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LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.—THE HISTORY OF PAINTING.

1827.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.

GENTLEMEN STUDENTS,

THE lectures which I shall have the honour of delivering to you upon the art of painting, will be given upon the plan laid down and pursued by my predecessors; exhibiting a brief and critical abstract of its history, with an explanation of its principal objects and its qualities; and then, in succession, treating of the principles upon which the practice of it is most effectively conducted, as exemplified in those great works which have stood the test of time and criticism.

In one respect only shall I differ from those who have preceded me: I shall endeavour to treat the two principal portions of my subject in a manner more distinct and separate than has hitherto been done; regarding that mode as the one most efficient for conveying to you clearly, the information which I desire to afford you; and as a wish to be useful to you has alone actuated me, I have, without scruple, taken from others whatever I thought most conducive

to that end; adding such reflections and observations of my own, as study and experience have elicited in my mind.

It has been repeatedly and justly observed, that "in the practice of the fine arts we never regard the labour bestowed, nor the materials employed: we consider as of value only the degree of excellence produced;" and it is the glory of the art of painting, that, by an ingenious application of the mind, materials of little inherent value are rendered available to delightful and important purposes.

Its productions have a double influence upon observers; they please the fancy, and they exercise the judgment; the imagination, the source of our greatest and our noblest pleasures, is excited by them, and the more serious faculties of the mind employed; and when it presents to us pleasing combinations of beautiful forms and colours, illustrative of existing objects, it is capable of affording far greater delight than the ordinary appearances of those things impart.

From the productions of an art possessing such power, an observer may reasonably expect, not only gratification to his fancy, or to his best affections, but also refinement of his taste, and elevation of his mind; and those paintings which have not the power to produce such effects, in a greater or lesser degree, but minister only to

the lower qualities, or to the baser passions of mankind, or but serve to illustrate the purposes of science, must be estimated and classed accordingly.

This beautiful and delightful art, to which such power is given, is the produce of a combined exercise of the physical and the mental powers of man; and it is therefore, divisible into two portions, — the one manual, the other intellectual.

The manual or imitative power, or the mere art of presenting upon a plane surface the appearance of natural objects, in form, in colour, and projection, is attainable, to a considerable degree, by any one possessed of a well-organised eye, a steady command of hand, and a tolerably fair portion of intellect, if accompanied by a good stock of industry; but the other, which governs and directs the imitative power of the art, in the representation of a fact, in the display of expression, of sentiment, or of beauty, requires a far greater expansion of mind in the artist, a more refined sense of discrimination and of taste, and a vivid exercise of the imagination, under the control of the soundest judgment.

Few, if any, of you, will, I trust, be disappointed when I state, that it would be an idle and delusive employment of our time, were I

here to dwell much at length upon the practice which exemplifies the mere imitative power of painting; for it cannot be taught by words. To attain proficiency in it, to wield with dexterity the instruments it employs, we must necessarily be long engaged in the use of them; and to the culture of this power the schools of this Royal Institution are more properly devoted than the lecture room. I shall, therefore, without entirely omitting this, principally direct your attention to the other,—the intellectual portion of the art. The knowledge of it, is the only sure guide to the artist who aims at excellence; and it greatly increases the pleasure derivable from fine pictures.

From this, arose the real interest excited by the art of painting among the most cultivated; this, has elevated it to the rank of a liberal art, has made it an object of attention to the most tasteful, has given to the artist a new sense, and to the public a pure, unadulterated source of gratification and delight.

The pleasure we enjoy in regarding the exquisite works of the Flemish and Dutch schools, if we except those of Rubens and Rembrandt, is of a class derived principally from the imitative power of the art, though not unaided by that which is intellectual. The perfection of the imitation they exhibit, is cognisable by all.

Its effect is mainly addressed to the visual organ; and if I were undertaking to explain the process of painting, I should, in a great degree, resort to them for illustration. But you have so many opportunities of enjoying all the pleasure and information they can yield to you, and the source of the gratification they afford is so evident, that it is the less necessary for me to speak of them, whilst that which the best among the great works of the Italian painters produces in our minds, is derived from qualities more abstract in their nature; and it requires some initiation into the mysteries of Italian art, ere it can be fully understood and enjoyed.

That class of imitation which is rendered so effectively in the pictures of the Flemish and Dutch schools is, undoubtedly, the object of the art of painting, when the art alone is considered without reference to its application. But when the knowledge of its imitative power was attained, and it was applied, as by the Italians, to aid the solemn purposes of the altar, in the display of subjects fraught with deep pathos, and intended to impress the mind with devotion, or to excite religious enthusiasm, it became manifest to the artists that close imitation of nature, rather impeded than promoted their object. They therefore found it necessary to treat imitation in the art of painting as it had

been treated in the sister art of poetry by the ablest poets; and they adopted a system of art, which, selecting a portion of an object as illustrative of the whole, gave full impression of it, omitting only minute detail.

This is the art of which I propose to treat here: this is that application of the art of painting, which, as far as the art is concerned, can alone ever place us equal in rank with Italy or Greece; this is the manifestation of that refined and exquisite discernment of its best principles which proves, that its gradual progress to excellence was not dependent, as is too often conceived, upon the uncertain and convulsive struggles of taste, but upon sound and long-continued exertions of human intellect.

If I may but in the slightest degree assist in establishing in your minds a clear perception of its value, and lead to its more complete cultivation among us, it would afford me the highest gratification; and though unfortunately it be true, that there is no national point of interest as yet adopted in our country, which calls for peculiar exertions of the art of painting, and directs the efforts of our artists to one great end; as there was in Italy, when it was carried onwards through three centuries, by the wants of the state, and the enthusiasm of the priesthood and the people; yet such is the advancement

of general knowledge, and the love of the fine arts, such the influence of good sense, and the power of wealth, that we may reasonably hope for its advancement in the estimation of our countrymen to the greater elevation of our fame; the more particularly if we, its professors, adopt, to the best of our abilities, that exalted taste of which I have spoken.

Were this grand style of painting, for by that title it is now known, confined in its principle to those subjects of religious interest whence it originated, were its beneficial influence confined to that peculiar class of subjects, whilst the art is employed among us only upon far less important matter, it would be scarcely worth our while to enter upon a consideration of it: but it is not. The same principle of selection and design which it requires, has provided for us the grand and beautiful pictures of poetic subjects by various painters,—by Raffaelle, by Giorgione, by Titian, by Julio Romano, and the Caracci; has produced the landscapes of Claude, of Poussin, and of Wilson; has entered even into the Dutch and Flemish schools, and given us the works of Rubens, of Terberg, and Metzu; and there are, in fact, no subjects, but those of the lowest kind, the treatment of which may not be benefited by the employment of it. In portraiture, Sir Joshua Reynolds exemplified it most

beautifully; and of this, his exquisite picture of Mrs. Siddons as the "Tragic Muse," is one among many admirable examples.

Though thus important throughout almost the whole region of the art, yet it was in the display of the form, and by that of the mental faculties of man, that this class of art was discovered and principally employed in the schools of Italy. Indeed, the chief object of the painter's art is man—the only intellectual being with whose form he is acquainted. To him, therefore, it is the quintessence of all form; beautiful in its corporeal perfection, and powerful in the spiritual essence imparted to it by its great Creator: hence the representation of it most powerfully excites the feelings of our minds, from the sympathies we necessarily entertain with our fellow-creatures.

To this great object of the art, therefore, as in individual interest, and in association, combining all others, I shall principally confine my observations. It has constantly engaged the attention of the greatest painters; and in discussing the mode in which it has been employed by them, in singleness, in combination, and in expression; in the exercise of its bodily, and the exertion of its mental faculties, we may the more readily attain the knowledge of those rules of art, which their experience has prepared for us.

The first important point which claims the attention of the student in painting is to obtain command over the materials of the art; the next, is to become informed of its capability and its governing principles; and the third, to know whereon he may employ it most worthily. For the attainment of the former, I can here, as I have before said, render you little or no assistance; you can acquire it only with your pencils and your palettes in your hands; practice, and practice alone, will conduct you to that end. For the rest, I shall endeavour to supply you with the best aid that I can. But before I proceed to discuss the principles of painting, derived in great measure as above stated, I think it right to call to your recollection the main points of its history.

"The progress of the arts and sciences," Mr. Opie has observed, "is the exact criterion of the degree of cultivation among nations;" but there is a remarkable difference in their history.

The progress of science is in its nature so apparent, and its results are generally so capable of immediate application to useful purposes, that we cannot fail to observe every step by which it advances. It is not so with the arts. Their march is in secret; and it is only when some great result takes place, proving the cer-

tainty with which their slow yet still advancing steps have been unobservedly conducted, that their improvement and extension are made known, and that their professors obtain the just renown which their patient and well-directed ingenuity deserves.

Thus, in the history of painting, we find abrupt mention of circumstances which seem to indicate some degree of progress in the practice of the art in the most distant ages; we are then merged in darkness and ignorance of its condition for a time, till peculiar occurrences again present it to our attention; a few scattered remnants of its productions are preserved to future times, and again its progress is interrupted and lost to our view.

How it first arose, how man was first induced to attempt to imitate upon a plane surface the actual projection of solid bodies, or in what happy country it was first displayed, are points which remain hidden in the mysteries of time past. We must be content to continue ignorant of both, for we know nothing certain of either. The dawn of the art, is as undefined as is the dawn of the morning; and its first approaches as undeterminate. We are left, therefore, with conjecture for our guide, to correct the fictions of antiquity, and supply the place of record. We might, indeed, be well content to take the

beautiful story related by Pliny, of the Corinthian maid tracing the shade of her sleeping lover as its origin, did not other historical narratives dissolve the agreeable spell that hangs over it, and carry us back to far more remote periods; and even in them we find reference to others now entirely removed from the recollections of man.

It is probable that its origin may with more certainty be sought, in an attentive consideration of the nature and propensities of our own minds.

We are children of imitation; our earliest sports and our earliest endeavours to acquire knowledge have their original direction in our love of it. Thence comes our aptitude to find resemblances between various objects, and thence also the willingness with which, in our youth, we rush to meet every suggestion of our fancy, when very imperfect images are found sufficiently potent to excite very full and powerful ideas in our minds.

The first useful application of painting was probably as an intelligent mode of conveying information; but such an employment of it was by no means calculcated to advance its progress far towards its present elevated condition; since, for the purposes of language, its emblematic figures, when once formed and accepted, must of necessity have become stationary; at least improve-

ment must have been confined within very narrow limits. Accordingly, thus we find it was among a people of whose knowledge and cultivation in science we can have no doubt,—the Egyptians.

We have little or no knowledge of improved or ornamental painting among them; nor have we any record of the liberal use of it among the Greeks till after the reported invention of arbitrary signs as letters, more fully applicable among those who speak the same language to the purposes of written communication than figures. When emancipated from peculiar system and peculiar application, no longer bound to accepted types from which it could not vary, cultivation of it to more perfect imitation of the almost infinitely varied objects of nature, and to purposes more ornamental, was the natural and almost necessary result.

With this simple and, I believe, well-founded idea of its primitive growth and application, arising from the native feelings of mankind, it would be but of little use should I relate to you the antiquated tales of its early stages, or endeavour to trace its progress from nation to nation; it has been frequently attempted, but never satisfactorily effected.

"The time is passed," as Sir William Drummond has said, "when conjecture, appealing to legendary tales, could give the lie to proba-

bility, and when fiction, wearing the veil of antiquity, could escape the detection of criticism." One set of people may, from peculiar causes, have cultivated and carried painting farther than others; and as mutual communication took place, either through the exchange of commodities or in warfare, they may have mutually assisted each other. Emigration also of bodies of men from one country to another, as of the Greeks into Italy, would of necessity cause a transfer of the practice of the arts; aiding their extension through the world, and increasing the chances of their advancement. But it is most likely, and most conformable to all that we know of the product of the arts, from the remnants of ancient Egyptian, Hindoo, Greek, and Mexican culture of them, that the same natural causes operated on all; acting among each nation upon the principles within, and the materials around them; though guided by different feelings, accordant to the degree of civilisation and cultivation they had attained; and, as those feelings and materials acted upon men trained under different circumstances, they would be employed in different manners, though directed to the supply of the same wants, or the fulfilment of the same purposes.

To illustrate this point, I would call to your recollection the works of sculpture lately brought

to this country from ancient Mexico. some of which are now in the British Museum. At first sight they appear to have some relation to those of the Hindoos or the Egyptians; and many have been induced to think, that in style of art, they have one common origin.

But it appears to me, that common origin must be sought only in the perceptions and feelings of man wherever he may be found. For though there be an apparent resemblance between the earlier works of art of those different nations, it will be found upon examination, to reside more in the nature of the materials employed, and in the rudeness and imperfection with which they are wrought, than in the objects chosen for representation (with the exception of man), or the style or mode of their combination; a diversity, sufficiently powerful to point out the perfectly original feeling of the artists in either country, as distinct from each other.

After the supposed period of the invention of letters to which I have alluded, the Egyptian priesthood continued to employ painting hieroglyphically, to support the mysteries of their religious system; and also, as it now appears, in the records of the government of their country. But it is from that ancient colony of the Greeks which established itself in Etruria, (modern

Tuscany,) that we derive the earliest existing examples of painting advanced beyond the system of hieroglyphics; yet still, in a polished manner, serving the same purposes. The late Mr. Christie, in his ingenious treatise upon their funereal vases, has conjectured, with great probability, that the paintings with which those vases are adorned, are copies or imitations of the mystical scenes employed in the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries. But though the composition and drawing of many of the figures are elegant, and of a polished character in form, it does not appear that the artists who painted them endeavoured to promote the cultivation of the art specifically; but having obtained talent enough to convey their ideas intelligibly to the initiated, were contented with repetitions of the same combinations, wrought in the same manner; or with very little variation or improvement.

That improvement of the art which took place in after-time, in Greece itself, bore a different stamp; was engaged in the display of character, and, at length, of effect; at a late period, however, when compared with the progress of sculpture.

It is with difficulty, and with doubt, that we can approach towards a satisfactory opinion upon the degree of perfection to which painting was carried in that birth-place of taste, ancient Greece.

The earliest descriptive notice we have of it is given by Pausanias, when he speaks of the pictures painted by Panœnus, the brother of Phidias the sculptor, in the Poicile at Athens; and of those painted soon after by Polygnotus, both there and in the Lesche, or public hall at Delphi. From these pictures we obtain the first fixed and satisfactory ideas of the real character of early Greek painting; and they appear to have been little more than tables of figures, above, below, and around each other; each designated by his name, but in no combination as a whole.

Once engaged, however, in the study of the art, that extraordinary people, the Greeks, soon applied to it the grand principles upon which their sculpture had been wrought through preceding ages. But sculpture had passed its prime in Greece, and polish had usurped the station of truth, ere the sister art had attained that degree of perfection, which has given rise to the strong encomiums of ancient critics, and the devotion of modern commentators.

Yet, the encomiums of authors who dwelt solely upon the effect produced on their minds by the paintings they contemplated, and not upon the art by which that effect was produced, are very inefficient authorities concerning the excellence or the extent of the principles of the art, or even the execution of it exhibited

in the workmanship! and of the truth of this, the history of modern painting affords us ample testimony. We have but to refer to many very imperfect productions now existing, of which there are on record superlative praises; proving how far the talent of the artist foreran the knowledge of the connoisseur. But, as Sir J. Reynolds has observed, "in all ages, the best works will have the best words."

When painting appears to have been first exercised by the Greeks as a liberal art, sculpture, cultivated as it had been for religious purposes through centuries of time, had attained its acme of perfection. This is made evident by the exquisite remnants of that art, brought from the Parthenon at Athens, and now preserved in the British Museum; some of which are, doubtless, by the hands of Phidias, and the whole were designed and wrought under his direction. It would appear, that the exquisite beauty and excellence of the productions of sculpture, affording so much gratification to the mind, both then, and during subsequent periods, controlled the studies of the Greek painters; and engaged them in endeavours to rival its perfection in form and pathos.

Accordingly you will find, in perusing the admirable dissertation given on this subject by our late learned professor, Mr. Fuseli, in his first

lecture, that the substance of the information it conveys, relates entirely to the feeling and intelligence with which the human form, the loftiest and most interesting subject upon which painting can be employed, was studied by them, and presented to view; either serene and undisturbed, or under the influence of the various passions of the mind.

It had been gratifying to us, if, in addition to the knowledge of this direction of their study, we were possessed of more efficient means for ascertaining the exact extent of the system of painting pursued by the ancient Greeks; the arbiters even yet of all which is beautiful and graceful in representations of the human figure; particularly since it has given rise to such exalted encomiums, and to so many brilliant illustrations of noble and elevated sentiments.

We have quite sufficient foundation for believing, that, in support of the power of expression pointed out by Mr. Fuseli, their painters possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the true quality of the imitation required by fine painting; and that in the composition of a group, or of parts in one plane, in grace, in taste, in character, and design, they rivalled the sculptors of the best period. Neither can we doubt, that they carried colouring of individual objects, and

the management of light and shade, to a great degree of perfection.

But, whether they ever understood and employed composition, as now extensively practised, in what relates to the union and separation of groups in different planes, effecting the distances of given objects, according to the rules of linear and aerial perspective; or whether they at all comprehended and practised the science of chiaro-oscuro, as employed by subsequent schools of art, we have no satisfactory means of deciding. This is the more to be regretted, because, as I have before said, we know by experience, that we are not always justified in attaching the praises given to the effects of pictures, to the mode of their execution also; but rather to their power of exciting vivid ideas in the minds of susceptible observers; which is frequently done by very indifferent, nay, by very bad painting. Indeed, we never arrive at any precise knowledge of the technical qualities of a picture, through the medium of description, unless a special mention be made of some peculiar points in the arrangement and management of its parts, producing the effect it is said to convey.

Of the only sources from whence real and full information could have been derived, concerning the system of painting employed by the

Greeks, time and circumstances have deprived us. The pictures of their greatest masters no longer exist, and we have to deplore the loss of all their writings on the art, which are said to have been numerous.

Had these, or either of these, been preserved to us, the doubt which now must ever assail us on the subject would not have been felt. But those imperfect guides in whatever relates to the practice of the art, the criticisms of ancient authors not artists, their inferences and remarks, do not appear to have proceeded from any portion of technical knowledge, and, of course, convey very little, or rather no information of that nature.

The whole of the information they afford us would lead us to conclude, that the best pictures by Grecian painters were similar in principle, though superior in composition and in execution, to those found in the ruins of Rome, Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia; and now to be seen at Rome and Portici.

We have no knowledge of other matter concerning their practice of painting, than such as might have been displayed upon the principles on which those pictures are conducted. No record, for instance, of artificial arrangements of background, or extraordinary contrasts of light and shade, relied upon for effect; or even

of any systematic arrangement or management of colour, if we except the simple allusion made by Pliny to the system of glazing, or toning as we now term it, employed by Apelles when finishing his pictures. Had such arrangements and effects existed in any striking degree in their paintings, we can scarcely suppose that they would have escaped the observations and remarks of those able writers to whom I have alluded, as they appear to have been perfectly sensible of the full power of relief exhibited in the pictures they contemplated.

The best among the ancient paintings which remain to us are extremely interesting in many points; and in none more than in the manifestations they convey of the nobler spirit of imitation, conducted with breadth and simplicity; derived, as I conceive, from the pictures of the greatest and most renowned masters. The figures are beautiful in proportion and arrangement, delicate in colour, and free, though not correct, in design; but the whole is deficient in perspective, and exhibits no intimation of the knowledge of ornamental chiaro-oscuro.

It may not, therefore, be considered unreasonable, if we conclude, from the circumstances which I have pointed out, that the technical system of painting employed by the Greeks was not

so extensive as ours; that they never contemplated the art upon that scale of effect on which many of its restorers in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries of our era, employed and transferred it to us. But I cannot doubt that they carried a more simple system very near to perfection; and I am by no means sure, that ours, though more difficult and ornamental, is more efficient for the principal purposes of historical painting, where sentiment or instruction is to be conveyed; or even for portraiture, where character is the principal object.

To doubt the excellence of their skill in painting, would be to set aside the acknowledged and accepted evidence of history. The enthusiasm with which the efforts of the art were received, the honours bestowed upon artists, and they were great and numerous, the decree passed by the Sicyonians, or the Athenians, it is doubtful which, prohibiting the practice of painting to those below a certain rank, are all testimonials of the abilities of their painters, and of the value attached to their productions.

Their extreme excellence was probably owing to their pursuit of one simple principle of effect; and to that we may attribute their power of rendering expression, their beauty of form, their taste and grace, and that intense degree of inte-

rest, the highest privilege of the art, which their works appear to have inspired.*

We have a great example of that simple principle, in the composition and effect of most of the pictures in the most sublime and impressive of all modern productions of the art; the ceiling of the Cappella Sistina, by M. Angelo; particularly in the picture of "The Almighty imparting life to Adam." There, is no introduction of extraneous matter; the attention of the observer is undividedly called to the consideration of that only, which is necessary for the elucidation of the subject; and the mind of the great artist being directed to that one point, undisturbed by the consideration of complex chiaro-oscuro, or the difficulties of producing varied and splendid colouring, was the better enabled to bring to full effect, the potent feelings of his sublime imagination.

As Greece fell a sacrifice to the boundless ambition of Rome, she lost her energies and her

* Those who desire more precise information upon this subject, will find a considerable mass in the library; in the works of Pausanias, of Pliny, of Winkelman, L'Abbé du Bos, Franciscus Junius, Montfaucon, and Turnbull; in the description of paintings found at Herculaneum, &c.; in the "Lives of Ancient Painters, by Carlo Dati;" and many interesting remarks are spread through the works of ancient authors, which are enumerated by Mr. Fuseli in his introduction to his Fourth Lecture.

arts. The productions of her genius and her taste were carried away by the conquerors, who, having too much occupation in securing their conquests and extending their dominion, never cultivated those arts which add splendour to conquest, with any tolerable degree of success; at least, if architecture and sculpture attained a degree of eminence among them, while they were upheld by the maintenance of rank and the necessities of the heathen religion, yet painting languished; till at length all three sunk under the miserable barbarism of those who, by their vices, disgraced and weakened the empire, and the rude nations who overthrew it; aided, I regret to add, by the mistaken prejudices and influence of the leaders of the Christian Church.

Very few citizens of Rome are known to have practised the art of painting.

That which the Greeks had held honourable, and by public decree forbade to be exercised by any under the rank of freemen; for which Polygnotus was declared free of all the cities of the Athenian state, and wherever he went had all things provided for him at the public expense; for which Apelles received all but the homage of the proud conqueror Alexander; the Romans, then unprepared by learning and philosophy to comprehend its advantages, deemed discreditable in their fellow citizens, and had recourse to the

Greeks for artists to adorn their houses; so that the mind of Greece maintained predominance, even in Rome, over all that was elegant and ornamental.

The plunder of that once glorious country, which the Romans despoiled of pictures and statues to an enormous extent, enriched Rome, but did not stimulate her citizens to emulate their authors; the first great proof that the cultivation and growth of national character in art, are not the necessary result of collections, however honourable and proper it may be for a state to possess them. They depend infinitely more upon the impulse given to the talents of men by employment; by their being called into action through a series of years; when their very errors are conducive to their improvement, opportunity being given for enlarged experience.

The result of those violent inroads made upon the fair and cultivated provinces of the empire of Rome, from the fourth to the seventh century, and which, aided by its own internal convulsions, completed its overthrow, was an abandonment of learning and of the arts, except in a few scattered instances.

This, strengthened by the growth of superstition in religion, rendered the minds of men barren of taste; and, obliging them to live by the sword, deprived them of the means of main-

taining civilisation; "a proud but disgraceful triumph of barbarism over all that does honour to humanity."

It is not in times, or under circumstances like these, that the arts find genial nourishment. Painting, though for a time employed in the decoration of palaces, baths, and houses, was at length preserved only in the seclusion of the cloister or the tomb, or employed in the adornment of missals.

We cannot contemplate this lamentable degradation of man from such a state of cultivation of mind as that of the Greeks, and at a time when it might have enjoyed the advantages derivable from the pure sources of revelation, and the doctrines of the Christian religion, but with sensations of the deepest humility and regret. Centuries elapsed ere the dawning of that degree of civilisation, which alone cherishes the fine, the liberal arts, was restored to Italy.

In the interim, the power of that portion of the Christian Church over which the Bishops of Rome claimed superintendence, extended and strengthened itself. Its rites and ceremonies were multiplied; splendour and magnificence gradually superseded the simplicity of the primitive worship of its Divine Author; and to this it was owing, that religion became a second time the foster-parent of art. Painting does not ap-

pear to have been employed for religious purposes, except in the little we know of Egyptian hieroglyphics, and of the Eleusinian mysteries, till long after the introduction of Christianity; and not at all efficiently in after ages, till its restoration among the Italians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Then, the second commandment of the Decalogue, which controls the Christian as well as the Jewish Church, acted in its favour, by repressing the use of sculpture, which became almost entirely confined to architectural purposes, and to monumental records of the deceased; whilst painting, in its turn, was engaged as the subject and the object of religious feeling.*

Among the heathen, painting was at first the

* I shall here interrupt for a short time the thread of my discourse, to state to you, that there is at present existing in the island of Ceylon, a peculiar and valuable application of the art of painting; the time of its introduction there being unknown.

To encourage good and repress evil, pictures are painted upon the walls of the temples dedicated to Budhoo, representing various incarnations of that divinity, when he is supposed to have mixed with mortals for beneficent purposes. Upon these pictures the priests expatiate to the people, and inculcate, by the examples exhibited, the value of a virtuous and religious life, or exhibit the evils attendant upon a wicked one.

By the politeness and kindness of Sir Alexander Johnston, some time resident at Ceylon in a high judicial capacity, I am enabled to lay before you copies of two of those pictures.

In the one Budhoo assumes the character of a good rajah,

mere incentive of pleasure, employed to afford gratification by representations of sports, or of manly exercises. At length, the Greeks employed it in honour of their heroes, in embodying the ideas of their poets or historians, the scenes of their idolatrous mysteries, or the offsprings of their own imaginations.

Its adoption by the Christian Church was for a more solemn and important service. But it must be confessed that there is no dissenting from the verdict given by Mr. Fuseli, when he said, "that the medium of art proffered by the Christian dispensation, was as much inferior to the resources afforded by Paganism, in a physical sense, as incomparably superior in a spiritual one."

The scenes which the ministration of the Saviour presented, however deep the interest and exalted the views they direct us to entertain, supply not, in their accompaniments, the rich materials for the practice of the art, in contrast or variety, which are to be found in the mysteries of the heathens, their religious rites, or their martial heroism.

Still, however, the combined resources of the

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or sovereign, performing various acts of charity and religion. In the other, he is reproving a cruel and tyrannical sovereign, and leading him to repentance.

There are above 500 incarnations of that divinity, recorded in the *pali*, or sacred language of the Budhoo system of religion.

Old and New Testaments, though they call not specifically, or generally, for that refinement of form, the quintessence of Grecian art, present sources of great and varied interest, which afford an engaging, an instructive, and important occupation for the pencil.

The Catholic Church, as her wealth increased, and she sought for the adornment of her altars, her churches, and her convents, added to the scenes and subjects derived from the sacred records, others, illustrative of the acts and sufferings of her multitudinous saints and martyrs, of a character totally diverse from the former, and which, in process of time, occupied more than a due share of the practice of painting, and greatly extended its sphere of action.

The first Essays of Painting, on its revival at the beginning of the thirteenth century, were confined to representations of subjects drawn from scripture history, principally of the New Testament, with the legendary history of the Madonna.

There had been preserved a certain quantum of composition in mosaics, which had been employed from the earliest periods of Imperial Rome through the whole of the dark ages; and many instances of it remain to be seen in Rome, in Florence, in Venice, and others of the cities of Italy; not, however, always in equal purity; as it fell in a great degree with painting, from which it drew its exemplars. Many of these,

exemplars must have been preserved from the better times; for it is a curious circumstance, that the mosaics of the thirteenth century are better representatives of Greek art, as is also the sculpture, than the paintings of the same, or somewhat later time.

The dome of the Baptisty of Florence, for instance, wrought in mosaic by Mino da Turrita in 1225, infinitely surpasses in every quality worthy of regard, that picture by Cimabue*, produced forty years afterwards, which was so triumphantly carried in procession to its destined place in the church of Santa Maria Novella, where it now is. Lanzi, in his Storia Pittorica, notices this peculiar condition of painting, when, speaking of the subsequent productions of Cimabue at Assissi, he says, "Painting, in his hands, began to dare that which, before him, had scarcely been done in mosaics."†

It was not on a sudden that the revival of the art took place. Several Italians had improved upon the weak and mean labours of the Greek painters, who at this time were brought to adorn the cathedrals of Venice, of Pisa, of Sienna, &c.; and the names of Margaritone of Arezzo, Junta da Pisa, Guido da Sienna, and some others, at-

* b. 1240.

† He probably alludes also to the colossal size of the figures painted by Cimabue on the ceiling of the tribune of the church of St. Francis.

test this fact. But it was reserved for Cimabue to break the bonds of the wretched prevailing system entirely, and commence that career of art, founded upon the principles of nature, which has since produced for us such powerful and beautiful examples.

The period when it occurred was that of the revival of learning, of poetry, and of science. Their influence, aided by philosophical enquiry, produced that poetic impulse of the mind which seems to have acted powerfully upon Cimabue and his scholar Giotto; for probably no painters have ever exceeded them in the force of feeling, as exhibited in their latter works. But the art of painting, the ingenious application of its materials in illustration of the conceptions of the mind, cannot be obtained in perfection at once. The extent of the power of those materials, and the most efficient mode of applying them, can only be known by long-continued experience, or excellent instructions; the result of a multitude of experiments, amending or correcting one another.

In the commencement then of the regeneration of painting, however perfect might be the ideas which inspired the artists, however largely they may have possessed the poetic quality of the mind required for the treatment of history in art, they presented images of their ideas, like

very indifferent, nay, very bad painters. The encomiastic praises and the honours bestowed upon them, but prove the esteem which was thought due to the art, and not the value of the painters; and that there is no reliance to be placed on contemporary criticism. To us, living in an age wherein knowledge is widely diffused, it would not appear any very extraordinary effort to depart from such rude hieroglyphics of nature, for the Greek painting brought to Italy at the beginning of the thirteenth century was little better; and have made pictures somewhat more resembling the human beings and things around us.

Yet, how difficult is the progress of man, the child of habit! How unwilling is he to part with early impressions! Even now, with all our knowledge, and all our experience of past mistakes, how unpopular is the appearance of novelty in art, however well founded!

It was fortunate, therefore, that a liberal spirit of reflection among men was found, when Cimabue made his bold adventure, and departed from the taste of his Grecian teachers; at first timidly enough, but at length boldly, and almost entirely. In his great work from scripture history in the Franciscan Church at Assisi, it is very nearly completely done. There, his style is of an enlarged character, the figures solid, and round, and have the air of being studied and

drawn from nature; proportion is well preserved, and the compositions are the offspring of so much true feeling, that, notwithstanding the gothic imperfections which remain, it justly entitles him to the name of the father of modern painting.*

What he had thus happily begun, was continued, and greatly improved, by his pupil Giotto†; whom with a father's care and affection he had educated as an artist, finding him possessed of a strong, and almost instinctive inclination for it.

The art of Giotto, is a medium by which well regulated feeling endeavours to excite a kindred sensation in the mind of an observer; art, not arrived at facility of execution, yet not dull; not yet able to abandon the influence of truth and propriety for the sake of effect; but curbed and controlled, by the natural influence which reason possessed over taste, in the early stages of civilisation; and not yet perceiving the whole truth, towards the attainment of which its labours were directed.

I am tempted to dwell for a while upon the works of this very extraordinary man, because their qualities mark the intrinsic, the real value of an especial and an important era in the history

* Prints of some of them, by Mr. Ottley, may be found in the library.

† b. 1276.

of painting. It is not my intention to enter into the minutiæ of that history from the time of which I am now speaking, to its best days, those of Raffaelle and M. Angelo; but this is a most imposing period of it, and the name of Giotto is fit accompaniment to theirs, as the beginning to the end.

Since I have been gratified with seeing the actual and better produce of this period, I am become inclined to think that it has been too slightly regarded, and too contemptuously treated, with opinions far indeed below its desert; for in it were sown the seeds of all that is best in the application of the art, if not in its technical practice.

Neither the labours of Cimabue, nor of Giotto, have been fairly developed to us here. Except their earliest productions, their painting is not of that meagre, and dry, and insipid style, which we find in works brought home by our Cognoscenti, and foisted upon them by dishonest dealers in Italy as theirs. The style of the better compositions of both, and more particularly of the historical pictures of Giotto, and the taste exhibited in them, appear to me, though weakly executed, to correspond in principle with good Greek art, notwithstanding their imperfections in minor parts. It is the true, the genuine source of historical painting; that which con-

trolled the Florentine school to the days of Raffaelle; who but completed it, or brought it to perfection. And if to portray a history with feeling and with clearness, to convey sentiment, and thus attract and engage the mind, employing imitation with breadth and simplicity, be the true object of the art; then the praise which belongs to him who aims at effecting this end is Giotto's! And as it appears to me that painting, at the present time, is swerving among us from this true point of interest, tending to ornament, to the loss of truth and sentiment, I think I cannot do better than endeavour to restrain the encroachment of so insidious a foe; to prevent, if possible, our advance in so erroneous and fatal a course, by showing how strong is the influence of art, where truth and simplicity prevail: and that, where no ornament is to be found; nay, even where imperfections are numerous; where drawing is frequently defective, perspective violated, colouring employed without science, and chiaro-oscuro rarely, if ever thought of.

The natural question then is, what can excite so much interest in pictures where so much is wanting to render them perfect?

I answer, that which leads to the forgetfulness of the want of these interesting and desirable qualities in the pictures of Giotto, is the excitation caused by their fulness of feeling!

well-directed, ardent, concentrated feeling! by which his mind was engaged in comprehending the points most worthy of display in the subject he undertook to represent, and led to the clearness and intelligence with which he has selected them: add to this, the simplicity and ability with which he has displayed that feeling.

It directed him in selecting his figures, and combining his groups; disposing the figures in actions becoming their characters; giving them expressions and situations, at once appropriate to those characters, and to the scene in which they were engaged; thus alluring the spectator till he becomes a participator in it, forgetful of the fiction and its defective accompaniments. Just as, in witnessing an impassioned dramatic display, we willingly abandon the recollection of all around us, and associate ourselves with the fictitious scene, and the characters of the piece; influenced, as they appear to be, and partaking of the sensations by which they appear to be excited.

This is the first true step in the natural system of the art, or of the application of it; and this was Giotto's more especially: the rest is useful, as it assists the influence of this, the indispensable. This, to continue the figure taken from the stage, is as Garrick acting Macbeth, or Lear, in a tie-wig, and a general's uniform of his day;

the passion and the character reaching men's hearts, notwithstanding the absurd costume.

If the art be found thus strong to attract the mind, to excite feeling and thought, and to engage the heart, by the mere force of unadorned truth in the important points, and without the aid of the valuable auxiliaries I have above alluded to, is it not at once manifest, that in its basis it is correct? and that the utmost force of historical painting is to be sought by continual emendation of this system? maintaining the spirit of its simplicity, supplying its wants, calling in the aid of these auxiliaries, within reasonable bounds; not permitting them to usurp the throne of taste and attraction, but rather requiring them to assist in humbler guise, to maintain and strengthen the legitimate authority of feeling!

This excellent and fruitful quality of the mind of Giotto is made manifest in his series of pictures of the Life of St. Francis, in the great church at Assisi, the first important application of painting to the representation of the legends of the Catholic Saints.* It is presented to us infinitely more perfect on the walls of the chapel of the Annunciata, in the amphitheatre at Padua,

* There are several prints from these pictures, as well as from those of Cimabue in the same church, by Mr. Ottley, and you may see them in the library.

a subsequent work; and I recommend to all artists who visit Italy, to make that work an object of particular attention; to endeavour to cast aside its gothic imperfections, and seek, what may undoubtedly be found in it, the real source of pathos in our art. It is as the poetry of Chaucer or of Donne, with their uncouth phraseology, full of sense and sentiment.

The subjects of this series of pictures, which are in fresco, and happily, in good preservation, are from the histories of the Virgin and of the Saviour. The compositions are simple, and go direct to their point. They are of that kind, which aims at explaining its object, and seeks for little or no unnecessary matter. The simplest principles are relied upon with security and effect. Proportion is well maintained, and like that adopted by Raffaelle. The figures are admirably employed, arranged most efficiently, and frequently with beautiful effect, in lines and in contrasts; the heads sometimes appear to be portraits, but most commonly are ideal, and have just and powerful expressions. The painting is very broad and simple, generally with little or nothing of the meagerness which is seen in the works of others of the time.

I have already spoken of their imperfections: they belong to the period. Plain blue skies, of one colour from top to bottom; golden glories,

raised partially from the ground, round the heads of Christ and his Apostles, the Virgin, and other holy characters; imperfect drawing of the hands and feet; but they are always well disposed, the hands particularly so, and the actions of the fingers, are the offspring, and the tokens of expression. The naked figure is always ill drawn, wherever it appears, and its colour dull and imperfect. The light and shade is the product of common daylight, without any attempt at the artificial effect of chiaro-oscuro.

Of draperies he was a perfect master; and it is an extremely curious thing to observe, that the intricacies of drawing, which, you all know are presented in drapery, were so completely overcome by him, who erred so egregiously in drawing the naked figure. He seems to have been rather too conscious of his power in this respect, as some of the compositions are overloaded with it; but it is always appropriate to the persons or characters, conducted in the foldings with good sense, and well exhibiting the limbs of the figures. The arrangements of the masses are large in their style, and of a class which Raffaelle appears to have imitated, and not often surpassed.

With this representation of a great work, which was unequalled in its day, and remained so for a century, I trust it will not be found

wrong, that I thus far differ from my predecessors, in dwelling so long upon this important seed-time of art, this early period of its cultivation; from whence, it must be confessed, the subsequent growth of the tree of knowledge, in painting derived its greatest perfection!

Not that I would direct you to employ the study of the fruit it then produced, as many students in Italy are now doing. Captivated with the fulness of thought and feeling, which the works of Giotto, and other painters of nearly the same period, present to their minds, they imitate many of their defects, while they seek to ensure to themselves possession of their beauties; which I deem labour lost and ingenuity wasted. But I am sure, that if you would comprehend aright the perfections of the works of the best times, you would do well to go for a season to the fountain head; and there seek to imbibe the knowledge of the basis of that which is best in art, as exhibited unadorned to your eyes, in the works of Giotto, Puccio Capanna, and others, up to the time of Masaccio; each, in their day, adding some new beauty or completion in support of the same system.

I am conscious that it is not easy for those who have the pleasure and advantage of seeing pictures, possessing a full display of all the finished qualities of the art, to give their atten-

tion to less perfect productions. The alluring blandishments of contrast, of colour, and of chiaro-oscuro, we are now taught to require; and are with difficulty persuaded to regard works where they do not invite us. I have nevertheless, convinced as I am of its inherent value, endeavoured to attract your attention to another, a higher and a nobler quality in art; which I think perfectly consonant with those blandishments, could any one be found capable of uniting them with propriety; and shall endeavour hereafter to prove the truth of that opinion. Feeling and sentiment are, however, the prime, the essential qualities in all kinds of art, as far as they can be conveyed; and they may be found admirably exemplified in their best application, in the works of many of the older masters.* Let not, therefore, their dryness and formality, their weak drawing and imperfect colouring, deter you from the study of them. They will assist your judgment and direct your feeling; they may be called the grammar of the art, which it is well for you to study, ere you attempt to display its perfect language; and,

* The original works must be seen to be duly estimated. In the transfer which is given of them in prints, or even copies, the delicacies of expression are too often lost, whilst all that is gothic and rude is retained.

versed in their simpler beauties, you will be better enabled to relish the higher style and more perfect labours, of the greater masters of the Florentine school.

LECTURE II.

THE HISTORY OF PAINTING. — *Continued.*

1827.

LECTURE II.

GENTLEMEN,

IT is an acknowledged axiom in the education of youth, that the quality rather than the quantity of their acquirements, should be the main object of a teacher's care. In nothing is this truth more completely exemplified than in the progress of an artist during his probationary labours.

It was in conformity with this sentiment, that, at the concluding part of my first lecture, I directed your attention so much at length to that important principle, which is the first of all good qualities in the application of painting, its solid basis in all its branches; viz., a just feeling of the characteristic qualities of the subject or object selected for representation, and a constant attention to its preservation; a principle, which never fails to excite interest wherever it is found; even, as I have shown to you, in very imperfect art; art which, without it, is weak and unattractive.

That high quality of feeling which I pointed out to you as so strongly impressive in the best works of the early painters, and more particu-

larly in those of Giotto, continued to actuate his immediate pupils and successors; and his works became examples to the artists of the Florentine school, throughout the fourteenth century: though some aberrations from his style occurred, through weakness or affectation.

There were some in different parts of Italy, as at Venice particularly, who endeavoured to improve it by ornamenting it with colour, rather than by removing its defects. But their estimation, and the praise they enjoyed were confined to their own provinces, and among those of similar pursuits; while the style itself was not only admired, and practised, and improved in minor points by the Florentines, but it obtained, as it merited, an interest over all Italy.

Giotto himself received honours equal to those bestowed upon any subsequent artist. He was sought for, even to contention, by the princes and nobles of Italy. The chief cities all required pictures by him, and he was the first who was engaged to paint in the Vatican.*

The imperfections which appertained of necessity to his art, were gradually removed;

* Unfortunately none of his works there are preserved. Even the mosaic which he is said to have wrought in the portico of St. Peter's, but most probably only designed, is, according to Lanzi, so changed by restorations, that very little of his design remains.

though the main-springs of its excellence, his line of general form, and his breadth, continued for a great length of time unequalled.

Though the more exalted and refined among the people of Italy seem thus early to have imbibed a taste for the arts, and to have honoured its skilful professors; yet it was long ere such esteem became a general sentiment.

Few of those who employed the artists had any idea of elevated taste; and yet, the employment thus given for particular purposes, gave also a specious claim to that control which has too often operated as an impediment in the growth of art. To something like this, there is reason to hope, was owing the extravagant use of gilding in early works, which must have exceedingly embarrassed the progress of the finer qualities of the art; though it was managed with extreme dexterity.

The splendour required by the altar seems to have been the first cause of the use of golden grounds, with compositions relieved from them by their own light and shade; which, having been used by the old Greek painters, were continued by the modern Italians. Gilding was afterwards employed by Giotto, only in glories round the heads of holy characters, or, on the borders of vestments; but soon after his death it was spread richly on embroidered damasked robes,

on armour, and even on the hair; completely confusing the effect of the whole, and enforcing the application of extravagant hues of colour.

The splendour thus acquired by the altar, was a sacrifice offered at the expense of the art; and this is the first instance, after its revival, wherein we find men mistaking addition of ornament for increase of sentiment; or rather adding the ornament to the destitution of sentiment, expecting to produce more engaging pictures; whereas it debased, and in measure destroyed the art.

And yet so engaging did this absurd ornament become to eyes accustomed to behold it, or so imperious were the demands for it by the church, that it continued in use long through the better times of the art.

Though Masaccio wisely declined it, with Bartolomeo della Porta, yet Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and even Raffaelle, employed it. In his Madonna della Seggiola, the glories are gold, and so are the necklace and ear-rings in the Fornarina.

He carried it with him into the Vatican. The Dispute of the Sacrament, or as it is now more properly called, the School of Theology, is full of it to excess; and so are others of his first works there. In the School of Athens there is less of this defect, and it is confined to the borders of draperies; but in the Heliodorus, the Attila, and other pictures wrought after he had better culti-

vated his native taste, and aggrandised his style, he omitted it; and probably his mind being once relieved of the idea of its necessity, imbibed in the school of Perugino, he would not, had he lived, have returned to it.

Michel Angelo even, does not appear entirely free from this evil in his great work in the Sistine Chapel; but, to the annoyance of Pope Julius who was offended by the slight use of it, there is but little, and that not upon the figures.

To return to the history, a singular and important feature of which is the immediate application of pictures to, or upon, the altars of the Christian Church.

This first occurred in the painting of small pictures of holy subjects upon the front of the predelle, or platforms raised upon the table, and on which is placed the holy chalice. Afterwards, but not till the beginning of the fifteenth century, long pictures, of divers subjects, divided by pilasters, and sometimes surrounded by saints and angels, were introduced, elevated upon the back of the predelle, or on the table. By degrees, the pilasters or divisions were taken away; the proportions of the figures, and the size of the pictures, increased; and the saints, instead of surrounding the picture like so many statues, were brought within it, accompanying the Virgin and the Saviour in varied positions and actions.

Thus were formed those anomalous compositions of holy personages which now so overload the altars of the churches of Italy, and the collections of the cognoscenti.

At the end of the fourteenth, and to the middle of the fifteenth century, arose a great number of ingenious artists, whose works are well worthy of attention. Angelico da Fiesole, Benozzo Gozzoli, Paolo Uccello, Pesellino, Filippo Lippi, Gentile do Fabriano, and many others, all and each adding more or less of finish and of refinement, still retaining the main object, expression. But the real successor of Giotto, as a great improver of the art, was Tomaso di San Giovanni, better known under the name of Masaccio*, whose labours give date to the second epoch of its restoration.

The great work upon which his fame principally depends, is in the church of the Carmelites at Florence. It consists of several pictures, the subjects of which are, the crime of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from Paradise; with some scenes of the life of St. Peter.

This work had been begun by his able master, Masolino da Panicale, with great good sense and ability in every respect; but Masaccio, continuing it, wrought with greater simplicity than he, with more grandeur of line and more fulness of effect: a combination most appropriate to the

* b. 1401.

serious and impressive nature of the subjects which he adopted.

This improvement, the result of a gradual progression in the scientific portion of the art through a period of 160 years, Masaccio happily combined with the pure principles of Giotto, in what relates to feeling and taste in composition. He recalled the attention of artists to unity of interest in treating a subject, and to the simplicity of that great painter's style; which had been in a considerable degree forgotten, in the search after minutiæ. He directed it to the consideration of that which was alone requisite and proper. His composition leads and confines the eye to the principal point of the subject, undisturbed by extraneous matter. There is great breadth in his imitation, justness in his proportions, and propriety, but not energy, in his choice of action, with a very good but simple system of colouring and execution.

From the predominance of those good qualities in his works, they became the favourite source of study to most of the great artists who succeeded him; Michel Angelo among them, and his foe, Torregiano; and it was while studying them, that the keen wit of the former excited the anger of Torregiano, and Michel Angelo's nose was, in consequence, deprived of a portion of its natural elevation.

Gifted with the power I have described, Masaccio may be considered as the true precursor of Raffaelle, in the application of our art to produce dramatic effect; and Raffaelle has himself testified his admiration of him, by adopting several of his figures, and applying them in his own pictures.*

There are but few of his paintings remaining; the best are in the churches of St. Clement at Rome, and of the Carmelites at Florence. The subjects of the former, are a series of the history of St. Catherine, large figures of the Evangelists on the ceiling, a Crucifixion, and some others. Of those at Florence I have already spoken.

In the former, we find much power over expression; but in the latter, it is limited to the action and look of his figures; and he has not ventured to give much variation or action to their features. Even the orator who accuses St. Peter before the Roman Emperor, does it with his mouth closed; and none of his figures exhibit that vigour of expression which we see, in some of the works of Giotto, and still more in those that surround the dying Ananias in the cartoon by Raffaelle.

* His Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge, and the figure of St. Paul exhorting St. Peter.

There is but little imagination manifested in the attire of his figures. Many are portraits, and are dressed as such, and almost all the draperies are transcripts of the dresses worn by the Florentines of his time; consequently, they sometimes offend our judgment, though they frequently are not unapt for the period of the subject. The naked figures which he introduced, are rather weakly rendered, than misunderstood.

Still, then, though far advanced, the practice of the art had by no means reached the goal to which it aspired. It was as yet inadequate even to the full and free conveyance of those thoughts to which its then limited powers, bound, as it were, the minds of its professors; viz., the representations of facts. Drawing had gradually improved, and the general forms of the figure, and of draperies, were maintained with simplicity and with faithfulness, but with tameness; and little indulgence of fancy entered into the imitation of natural objects. Some imperfect views of the capabilities of the art were still acted upon.

Among other errors, attempts were not unfrequently made, to rival the power of poetry, and give a detailed history, in one picture, of various events appertaining to the life of an individual; presenting him at one and the same time, from youth to manhood; engaged in

various pursuits, or enduring varied sufferings. Masaccio even is guilty of this anomaly: as is also his master, Panicale, in those pictures he had previously painted of the same series.

This circumstance evidently arose from the removal of the ornamented bands which previously were employed to separate pictures painted upon the same wall; such as surround those I have mentioned to you by Giotto, at Padua, and at Assisi. Figures the size of life were not yet employed, but such as were about four feet, or four feet and a half high; and, consequently, when a large expanse of wall was to be covered, one subject was not productive of matter sufficient for the purpose, and the artist ventured to give others, relating to the same persons, without a line of separation. Such a practice, however, is an evident abandonment of the proper sphere of the art of painting; and an unwise manifestation of its weakest point, in comparison with the powers of its rival. But it ceased, or nearly so, after this period; and painters became content to display their skill under the right influence of the native power of the art they professed.

Ghirlandaio*, who succeeded Masaccio, continuing the same kind of art, added nothing but more technical power; more finish, but less breadth.

* b. 1449.

He had more fancy, perhaps, but a less elevated imagination, with less comprehensive feeling of that which is specifically required by fine art. That his fame was great among his contemporaries, as his practice was extensive, is made evident, not only by the employment he received, but by his having been selected to be the master of Michel Angelo.

With him and Perugino*, the teacher of Raffaelle, and some others of nearly equal powers, closed the second epoch of the art in the Florentine school. The third commenced with the bright names of Signorelli, Da Vinci, Bartolomeo della Porta, Michel Angelo, and Raffaelle.

If any proof were wanting of the extreme difficulties attending the advancement of the art of painting, which, now that it has been exhibited to us in its more perfect state, appears comparatively of easy attainment; let it be considered, that nearly 200 years elapsed from the period of its restoration, ere its more polished principles and practice were brought in aid of the natural, and almost instinctive feeling of expression with which it began: and *that*, notwithstanding so many men of ingenious minds were continually engaged in the practice of it,

* b. 1446.

in an age of learning, when they were aided by poetical and philosophical investigation.

This consideration, surely, stamps a value upon the art, of no light impress!

How great has been the pleasure derived by mankind from the result of that intense application, and long-continued labour, with which the language of the art was perfected. The feeling, which called for it, that fervour of the mind the genuine impress of nature, apt at all times, and by the poet poured forth in unpremeditated verse, who "lisps in numbers, for the numbers come," was ready for display in painting, whenever the means were prepared for conveying it.

But the means required for that purpose,—the application of ordinary materials to the production of light, and life, and expression,—was not, like language, the immediate gift of nature, but the product of man's own ingenuity; and was acquired, as we have seen, only by long and active perseverance.

If, disguised by imperfections, incident to the different stages of its progress, it was admired and enjoyed, by those to whom it was addressed; no wonder that, when it became adorned by increased power in its developement, and by polished selection in its means, and the application of them, it was received with rapture, and its professors exalted to honour.

We now arrive at the period when it attained that dignified and important degree of estimation.

Till this time no government had adopted the art of painting as an object worthy of particular encouragement. The church, in its individual establishments, had, indeed, become its protector, and continued to be its encourager; and found, in return, a powerful aid in its productions, to the furtherance of its own views.

But the Papal power, the head of that church, had not, except in a few instances, employed painting; preferring mosaics for ornament in the churches of Rome devoted to its own particular service. In proof of this, we find that there was not any school of art established at Rome, previous to the time of Raffaelle. The painters employed in the Lateran Palace by Pope Innocent VIII. were chiefly Florentine: after him, Sixtus IV. called upon the same school to adorn his new chapel in the Vatican; and, indeed, almost all those who in after-times supplied that great seat of church government with her principal and her best works were Florentines or Bolognese.

About the middle of the fifteenth century, the family, De' Medici, exercising sovereignty in Florence, adopted the arts as objects worthy of their especial protection and encouragement, in common with science and literature. By this

they increased the splendour of their existing elevation to grandeur and to power, and promoted more securely their future fame; and to them, and to their example and influence, painting is indebted for the most brilliant efforts of the Florentine school. And well are they rewarded for their liberal and generous conduct! What were now the record of their fame, had they not been actuated by that elevated feeling, that desire to promote the advancement of literature and the arts?

Hitherto, the object of the art of painting, in the school which they encouraged, had been single, or nearly so, as I have shown to you; and its career had been conducted with steps careful but slow; but now, having obtained a firm footing, it suddenly sprang forward with a degree of elasticity beyond all expectation. Its professors, excited by more elevated ideas, left the beaten track of mere imitation; and, maintaining its general principle, as a basis for their exertions, launched forth in pursuit of those qualities which add lustre to truth, and grace to beauty. We have henceforth, at least for a season, to contemplate its productions, adorned with refinement, and executed with more perfect freedom and fancy.

The anatomy of the human figure was made an object of more particular study, and great aid

was gained in its application, by the discovery of many remnants of ancient sculpture and painting. Mere imitation of the model, being abandoned for that select combination of beauties to be found only in the general mass of mankind; that ideal excellence of form and character, which was the idol of the ancient Greeks, became the great object of attention.

The artists were not content with dramatic illustration of facts, as heretofore; but, giving the reins to their imaginations, indulged their fancies in the regions of the spiritual world.

Luca Signorelli da Cortona* claims priority in this grand exaltation of the art. His great works in the Duomo, at Orvieto, the Resurrection, with the Punishment of the Wicked, and the Reward of the Just, in separate compartments, and a number of minor compositions in the same church, present to us the product of a vivid imagination, purified of the gross and puerile imagery introduced in representations of the same subjects by his predecessors. Bold and daring foreshortenings, accompanied by great vigour of line, are here rendered with the greatest truth; exhibiting perfect knowledge of the anatomy of the human figure, employed by a varied and fertile invention in striking

* b. 1439.

contrasts and combinations; and with an almost complete abandonment of the style of arrangement and effect which had till then been the guide of the school. The skill he there exhibited, fully justifies a belief in the declaration of Vasari, and of others, that Michel Angelo attentively studied his works.

Coeval with Signorelli was Lionardo da Vinci*; than whom no one more generally accomplished ever embraced the profession of an artist. Extreme sensibility to refinement in all that he undertook, appears to have been the prominent feature in his character; and this ardent desire for excellence, the cause of his bringing so few works of art to perfection.

Still perceiving somewhat beyond that which he had effected, he laboured to attain it; and was never satisfied, till the exalted aspirations of his mind were fully presented to view.

Original in thought, fertile in expedient, active in mind and body, there appears to have been no bound set to his pursuits. Each of the arts which adorn human life, and the sciences which give power to man, engaged his attention; and it is the necessary consequence of his refinement of thought and his superabundance of pursuits, that but little of his painting remains to testify

* b. 1445.

his ability, considering that he enjoyed fifty years of manhood. But, it must be confessed, that little is powerful; it amply informs us of his pre-eminent acquirements as a painter, and justifies his elevation among those of the highest rank.

Soon after Signorelli, by venturing so ably and freely into the world of imagination, had provided extended means for the occupation of the art; Lionardo added a novel and important feature to its technical power; abstract in itself, but duly founded on some of the peculiar effects of nature.

The quality to which I allude, is chiaro-oscuro, in its most serious character: that which is selected, or composed, to exhibit an individual object to advantage; totally different from those styles, of which I shall speak hereafter, the Venetian and the Flemish.

The style of artificial management of light and dark introduced by Da Vinci, distinct from the mere natural light and shade of objects (and little more had been attended to previously), consists principally in a selection of a concentrated light, and, consequently, a larger quantity of shade upon his figures (such as is produced by lamp-light); and the union of those shades with the grounds of relief. It was by him practised upon rather a confined scale, which gives

monotony to the character of his minor works; it was afterwards extended in its application by Fra. Bartolomeo, and Mariotti Albertinelli; but found that breadth which gives it its ultimate perfection, in the hands of Correggio.

In support of this original and valuable quality, his pictures bear the impress of the most skilful and earnest investigation into the works of nature, and the preceding productions of art; pursued with almost inconceivable industry and ingenuity.

That he obtained power over the most complicated composition, is sufficiently testified by his well known group of horsemen contending for a standard; a portion of a large work, intended to have been painted on the wall of the great council chamber at Florence, in competition with Michel Angelo. In this composition, his line is an enlargement upon that of Masaccio, and even upon his own; for it cannot be said that grandeur of line is a prevailing feature in his works generally: even in his Last Supper, his most important work, painted in the refectory of the Dominican Convent at Milan, his line, though varied, is not large; but, to compensate, there is in it, that great quality to which I have so repeatedly directed your attention: it springs from truth, it always conveys feeling, as it is wrought with understanding.

But fulness of expression, even to minuteness, united with suavity, was the quality he principally and perseveringly sought to develope; and he accomplished it. It grieves me to say that this most extraordinary work of art, to which I have just alluded, is now but a ruin; and our copy, which is before you * and gives you a very good idea of its general effect (which Morghen's print does not), is become a valuable possession.

Since there have been given to the public many contradictory reports concerning the condition of this important picture, it may not perhaps be unpleasing to you, should I occupy a little of your time in reading a few remarks, extracted from notes I made before it, when at Milan in 1825. "Mr. Hilton and myself examined its condition with careful and minute attention, and could with difficulty find a portion of its original surface. The little we did find, exhibited to us an exceedingly well prepared ground, smooth to the highest degree, and the painting upon it free, firm, and pure.

"Till this time all paintings on walls had been wrought in fresco; but oil painting, which had become known and practised in smaller works, better suited Da Vinci's mode of proceeding, as it admits of retouching or repeating; and

* A copy by Marco d'Uggiono, a pupil of Da Vinci, now in the Royal Academy.

unfortunately he adopted it here. He was not, however, the first who had employed it in that way: Domenico Veneziano, and one or two others had made tempting examples for him; and thus led to a result so unfavourable to his reputation.

"It would appear that the vehicle which he employed, whatever it were, had no union with the ground, and therefore the surface cracked; and whenever damp found its way through those cracks, and between the painting and the ground, small parts of the former were thrown off, till at length large blotches were formed, exhibiting the white preparation beneath. These have at various times been filled up; and it had been well, if with that filling-up had rested the efforts of the restorers. But their attempts to match the remaining colours failing, as I suppose, they have taken the shorter method of cure, by repainting the whole surface of the part they were required to mend; so that at the present time, little, or nothing, it may be said, remains of Lionardo, save the composition and the forms generally.

"Of the heads, there is not one untouched, and many are totally ruined. Fortunately, that of the Saviour is the most pure, being but faintly retouched; and it presents even yet, a most perfect image of that Divine character. Whence

arose the story of its not having been finished it is difficult now to conceive, and the history itself varies among the writers who have mentioned it. But perhaps a man so scrupulous as he, in the definement of character and expression, and so ardent in his pursuit of them, might have expressed himself unsatisfied, where all others could see only perfection."

Our skilful Professor of Anatomy informed us that to this extraordinary man we owe the first scientific tables of anatomy; to him also, are we indebted for the first intelligent essay we have, on the principles and practice of the art of painting: a powerful testimony, in addition to other writings, in the King's collection, the Museum of France, and the Ambrosian Library at Milan, of his ability as of his industry.

The increased knowledge obtained by the exertions of those who have subsequently given their attention to the subjects upon which he wrote, now cause many of his observations to appear trite and common-place; but that ought not to diminish our respect for him, who, in an age of comparative weakness in science, could discriminate, and display so ingeniously, that which was so just and useful in art.

Distinct from Lionardo, in most qualities appertaining to the painter, was Fra. Bartolomeo

di San Marco, or Della Porta*, another of those great luminaries of the art whose works shed lustre on the age in which they lived; and who almost simultaneously arose, and carried it onwards to perfection. I think it not improbable, that he was the first of those who, at this period, painted pictures with large figures for the altar; a practice, which had ceased after the first works of Cimabue and Giotto, and a few others of inferior quality.

Bartolomeo, with his friend and able rival Mariotti Albertinelli, enamoured of the taste of Lionardo da Vinci in colour and chiaro-oscuro, adopted it, and employed it ably. And if Bartolomeo did not precede Da Vinci in selecting a colossal scale for his figures, at least he surpassed him in the grandeur of line with which they were composed; though he never appears to have been inspired with a glimpse of that perfection of character and expression, the perpetual and important object of Lionardo's study.

He regulated precisely the geometric form of composition, long before employed, in those groups of religious personages which were so much in request by the church; and which, supported by his adoption, and his able management of chiaro-oscuro and of colour, suits so admirably its purpose, of producing an imposing

* b. 1469.

and solemn effect at the altar. Dignity and elevation of sentiment, were thus added to matter in itself uncongenial, and even repulsive; and the novel grandeur of style in which it was done, proved its author worthy of being the friend and guide of Raffaelle.

His introduction of deep and varied colour, and management of it in unison with the grand and solemn style of Florentine design, forms another distinguishing and important feature in his practice. In his best works, we find the tones he employed extremely true to nature; and so consonant to the expression of his subject, that, united as they are to good form, I cannot but regard them as affording one of the best and most powerful arguments in favour of the system proposed by the Caracci, for an union of the finer qualities of the art.

But of that hereafter. His works are numerous; never weak, and oftentimes grand and imposing.

How he laboured to acquire the knowledge of the figure, and the foldings of draperies; and with what earnestness he cultivated his taste, by which alone he acquired so much skill in selection, is made evident by the numerous and elaborate studies from nature now remaining of his hand; a great number of which are

in the possession of our justly renowned president.*

To this advanced state of the art, and in continuity of the same track of study, was now added the product of the powerful genius of M. Angelo Buonarotti †, whom Mr. Fuseli has well termed, "*the salt of art;*" since he imparted to it, that essence of intellectual existence which no other painter has ever equalled.

The sight which I recently enjoyed of the works of this wonderful man, filled me with astonishment, and with delight; and proved to me, how imperfect is the agency of words to convey ideas, in comparison with such efforts of the pencil.

How has every author who has written on the works of M. Angelo, struggled to impress us with a feeling of his power; of the force of sentiment that reigns in his works, of the dignity and sublimity of his conceptions, and the grandeur of his style; few have discoursed upon his intensity of thought, and capacity to convey

* Sir Thomas Lawrence:—particularly two volumes of studies, containing in number more than 200. They were bought by Sir T. from the collection of his able predecessor in the chair of the Royal Academy, Mr. West. The drawings consist, principally, of the studies for the figures and draperies employed in many of his pictures; and must have been carefully, as well as skilfully, drawn from nature. These books came from the Florentine collection, but how is not known.

† b. 1474.

it; and how vague is the impression on our minds when all is said! Look but upon a single figure from his hand, and all is felt.

He, of all painters, has in one respect been most unfortunate; his errors, if I may speak of them, have been mistaken for his beauties; and his beauties become extinct, in the transcripts that have been given to us in prints or copies of his works, save a very few; and defaced or utterly lost, in the exaggerated labours of his professed imitators.

The origin of that quality which forms the intrinsic excellence of his art, seems not to have been sought for by them. It does not appear that the basis of that art was their guide, but rather the mere surface of his pictures. That varied grandeur of line, those contrasts of form, which are by many regarded as the sole characteristics of his painting, are but the product of a higher quality; the result of that strong feeling of his mind, which induced him to aspire at o'er-mastering the most arduous labour of the pencil; imparting life and sentiment to his figures, by the appearance of motion.

Where the art of other men ended, that of M. Angelo began.

His mind seems to have found its resting-place only in the regions of imagination; to have

dwelt with most gratification there, where it found congenial food for its enjoyment. In pourtraying a fact he was surpassed, far surpassed by Raffaelle. But he stepped apart from the ordinary track of his predecessors more than any other man; gave a new direction to the art in his own works, and left a new lesson to others; particularly in his representations of the human figure.

He increased the grandeur previously added to form, gave life and energy to motion, intensity to thought, and strength to character; and without the aid of allegory, personified abstract sentiment.

These were the irresistible impressions I experienced, when contemplating his great, his wonderful work on the coving and the ceiling of the Cappella Sistina in the Vatican. There is very little display of actual fact; almost all is the offspring of his exalted imagination applying the materials afforded him by natural objects, as agents to convey to others, the abstract ideas, the potent impulses of his own mind.

He pressed home that fulness of feeling which is the basis of all that is good in the older artists. It is particularly felt in observing his Prophets and Sibyls in the work I have just mentioned: it is admirably exhibited in the figure of Adam in that sublime conception, of the Almighty impart-

ing life to the creature of his hand; a work dictated by an unrivalled power of thought, and executed with the simplicity and grandeur conformable to the feeling that inspired it.

Whoever dwells upon it, till his sense imbibes the feeling it is calculated to inspire, will be led to the highest estimation of the imaginative power that conceived it. No art has yet surpassed that noble figure of the first man rising upwards at the divine command, to receive the spark of animation from the finger of his Almighty Creator; who self-impelled, and floating in the atmosphere, is surrounded by the acknowledged personifications of his wisdom and his power; the secret agents of his sovereign will, hidden from the view of man by the dark mantle that surrounds them! In the whole region of the art in which it has been my lot to range, I have met with no picture so full, so just, so spiritual, yet so simple as this; so grand and solemn in its effect; yet without the aid of that customary resort of those who make the grand and imposing their aim — darkness. There is poetic feeling of the highest class; allegory of the most refined nature; the application of the art exalted to the noblest purpose.

It is in the peculiar power exhibited in that picture, that he stands as much apart from the practice of his predecessors, as by his grandeur of

line, or the fulness of his breadth; and he stands so entirely apart, that no one, whose works I have seen approaches him. Even in his most capricious compositions, and it cannot be denied that many deserve that title, that power of imparting life, and motion, and sentiment prevails, and distinguishes him from all others.

It would seem, that the natural desire within him to impart these qualities to his figures, as far as his subject was capable of displaying them, impeded, or rather misdirected his course, when attempting to pourtray a history. He could not be contented to take the natural impression of the subject, and adorn it like Raffaelle, but rather sought the imagery in his own mind; and guided by the desire to convey intensity of feeling, too often formed the actions of his figures with artificial contrasts; which confuse the mind they were formed to enlighten. Thus I cannot but imagine it might have been with that beautiful figure of Eve at the foot of the tree of knowledge; which, though its action be graceful, and its form worthy of the mother of the human race, is not so acting its part, that we are led as by Raffaelle, to intermingle with the scene, and believe we see it, as it must actually have happened.

The defects of his style then, originate, as has been observed by others, in the same source

as his beauties; I say not this to defend them; but it is sufficient for me to convey to your minds a sense of such defects, which I regard, as spots in the sun.

They are still blemishes, but they are overpowered by the splendour that surrounds them. Unfortunately, they have been seized upon by his mistaken imitators, as the only source of his grandeur and elevation of style; and have led to a wrong apprehension in the world, of his true character as an artist.

But I will not pursue the enquiry; it will be more useful for me, convinced as I am of his gigantic power, to trace its happier efforts when he found congenial matter, and that was in his Prophets and Sibyls; as well as in other subjects of the like ideal nature, drawn from his own poetic imagination. In the composition of those single figures, in varied actions, and with varied expressions, employed to convey one common idea, allusive to the coming of the Saviour; he has caught, and rendered that subtle quality of action and of look, which perfectly conveys the idea of mental agency; or in the appropriate language of Mr. Fuseli, has "*unravelled the features of meditation.*"

This is the point which is entirely and excluclusively his; and from this work whatever has since been done of the kind, derives its origin.

To this end he was conducted by a native vigour of mind, which led him early to see what was still wanting to give life to art, and to adopt the means necessary for its production.

For this he increased in his designs, the flow of line, the boundary of the form and action of the human figure; and more than this, he endowed it with a living soul.

There is no coarse display of anatomical knowledge in his naked figures. There is no dissection of the muscles laid bare to our view; they are but hinted at, and delicately marked, where draughtsmen and engravers have given us them hard and fully defined. In nothing, have I found myself so mistaken, as in the idea I had been led to entertain of the tone and character of M. Angelo's painting, from what I had read, and heard, and seen of his works, before I went to Italy. But the sight of those I have mentioned, and of that tremendous picture of the Last Judgment, where if it existed, the error I have alluded to would have been most apparent, entirely removed the delusion I had been under; and taught me how I ought to estimate his principles and his works.

Now, I know, or think I know, what induced Sir J. Reynolds to speak of M. Angelo in the manner he has done. Wherein he followed him! what it was that he imbibed on regarding his

panitings and transplanted to his own, as far as was in conformity to his own native grace and taste, and the necessities of his practice. Not merely the flow of his outline, or the grandeur of his forms, but that which gave birth to both ; his feeling, and his breadth, the breathing essential individuality of the character which he personified, and which our first great president, and leader in art, imparted to his portraits, gave it to the heads, and to the actions of his figures.

It was for this, as I conceive, that he said, "*he felt himself grateful for the knowledge, that he was capable of entertaining the sensations M. Angelo intended to excite.*"

That he had penetrated his secret, and applied it in the most ingenious manner, an attentive observer, cognisant of the works of both, will readily perceive.

But I shall have occasion to return to the works of M. Angelo when I treat of the principles of the art: for the present therefore I leave them, and turn to those of another artist, whose excellencies combined with his, completed the triumph of the Florentine school— RAFFAELLE.*

For whose successful career it would seem that all things had been preparing for the 200

* b. 1483.

previous years. It was begun by Cimabue, strengthened, and thrown into a right direction by Giotto, confirmed by Masaccio, improved by Luca Signorelli, Lionardo da Vinci, and Fra. Bartolomeo, till at length it was perfected by Raffaelle, with the aid of that grandeur of style, which he caught of M. Angelo; and that sense of grace and beauty, the inmates of his own mind, improved by study from remnants of ancient Greek and Roman art, then recently discovered.

Less vigorous however, and consequently less independent in mind than M. Angelo, Raffaelle did not display that precocity of talent, which led the former to daring competition at once, with the great of old. At first he was a careful, but graceful imitator of his father, and of his master Pietro Perugino; and there remain at Perugia many of his pictures in their original stations, which show how entirely he was under the control of the circumstances by which he was surrounded. In the same churches where those works exist, there are some also by Paris Alfani, his fellow-scholar; and it yields an admirable lesson for the correction of the vanity incident to youth, and the encouragement of modest ingenuity and industry to know, that Alfani, exhibited more energy and freedom of invention and of line than Raffaelle, and seemed

likely to have surpassed him; but he became, in consequence perhaps of that freedom, a mannerist, and was lost; whilst Raffaelle, the humble, but steady and industrious cultivator of truth and beauty, rapidly increased in power; and was rewarded by the highest degree of success and honour in life, and by the glorious fame which waits upon his memory.

The pure simplicity of the taste and feeling of Perugino in both form and colour, seems to have found congenial union with the suavity of the mind of Raffaelle; and it encouraged both the delicacy of thought, and the accuracy of design, which characterise the earlier efforts of his pencil. But the renown of M. Angelo, and of Da Vinci, and the encouragement given to the arts by the house of Medici, led him to Florence, where he enjoyed the friendship of Fra. Bartolomeo; and there, abandoning the tameness of Perugino, he improved his style, and added to his fame. Constant study from the antique, from nature, and from the most excellent of former artists, prompted his imagination, while it strengthened his power of execution, his taste for grace and beauty, his capacity for composition, and his power over expression; and prepared him for the production of those great works, which still extend his reputation, and add lustre to his name.

Dramatic art was his! that application of painting which displays the conflicts of human passions; the actions and characters of men in communion with their fellow creatures.

The incidents of human life, were depicted by him with more force, more clearness, and more variety than by any other painter.

His representations of facts, are such as lead us to suppose that they must have happened just as he has represented them; and when they required illustration, he adopted the most natural and direct means for effecting it.

To him we are indebted for an extended and united application of those principles of the art which engaged the attention of the Florentine school. Much he borrowed of others, particularly with regard to line and colour; but, in one main quality, he was entirely original, viz. the extension and refinement of picturesque historical composition; which he conducted with the highest and the soundest sense. To that, which before his time had been effective in its simplicity, he added the charm of variety, without impairing its purity; and thus superinduced that delightful union of grace and beauty with good sense, which, whilst it delights the eye, gratifies the understanding; and is, indeed, the ultimatum of art.

It has been, and it still is, the tone of con-

noisseurship, to elevate his portraiture above that of all others! But for my own part, though I admire it much, I can never agree to place him in that department on a level with Titian, Vandyke, or our own delightful enchanter, Sir Joshua.

Considering that they flourished at the same period, and divided the attention of the world of art in their day, were employed by the same dignified persons, and laboured to adorn the walls of the same magnificent abode of power, one can scarcely avoid comparing the excellencies of this extraordinary man, with those of his great rival M. Angelo. And yet it is difficult to do so, their individual courses, relative both to the principles and the application of the art, were so opposed to each other. M. Angelo stands alone, apart from all who went before him. Raffaelle is greatly beholden to others. He carried forwards in a direct line, and improved the good that had preceded him. When he abandoned that course, and attempted to walk in the sphere of M. Angelo, which he did not, till the path, as well as the object was pointed out by that great master, he does not appear to have been actuated by that powerful impulse which gave birth to the works he emulated; but like a timid adventurer in an unknown region, his step was unsteady, his native power seems to have been paralyzed,

and he fell below himself. Witness his Isaiah, in the Church of St. Agostino, in Rome; his figures of Justice and Mercy, in the Vatican; and even his Sibyls in the Pace; though in that picture, full of grace and beauty, he was most successful.

Within his own sphere, a relater and adorner of historical or poetical fact, displaying those acts which exhibit the virtues that adorn, or the vices that degrade our nature, the grace and tenderness of the female character, or the more active vigour of man, with appropriate form, character, and expression; he also stands alone, unrivalled by any. His earlier pictures mark that power! he displayed it largely, before he had attained his 21st year, in the extended compositions and cartoons he prepared for the pictures by Pinturuchio in the library of the Duomo at Sienna; and it never failed him, till at length he reached the perfection exhibited in the chambers of the Vatican, and in the cartoons. By this, he engages our hearts, and proffers to our understandings, actions, and scenes, which we immediately recognise as true; our sympathies are thus excited, and we feel no difficulty in comprehending his whole meaning.

M. Angelo's pictures have more recondite matter in them. We must think, ere we can enjoy the whole pleasure proffered to us.

Instead of comprehending his whole intention at once, we are called upon to reflect. His forms strike at first sight, as singular, and grand; attract attention, elicit enquiry, — and enquiry substantiates a feeling of the sentiment which actuated him; it takes possession of the mind, and, when understood, there is no resisting the acknowledgment, that his art is of the highest quality, though it may not be the most agreeable. Each, therefore, retains his specific influence over our minds; and it is a curious trait of the difference of the genius of these two great men, that each failed most, where the other was most excellent. Raffaelle has the advantage, however, of appealing more to the heart, and thereby more awakening the sympathies of mankind; and will have, as he almost always has had, the largest share of admirers.

Those great and unrivalled works they produced, have now become our standard guides to principles in historical composition; and I shall, hereafter, have to direct your attention to more minute examination of some of them in illustration of the main object of these lectures.

I have now, gentlemen, conducted the history of the art upon which it is my duty to address you, to the utmost state of perfection which it

attained in the Florentine school; and I have purposely confined your attention to its progress in that school, without any reference to others, which arose, and were matured nearly at the same time.

To this I have been impelled by two reasons. First, it was there that those paintings were produced which have so long borne the stamp of pre-eminence! I was, therefore, desirous to impress you with an undisturbed and concentrated idea of the growth of that application of the art of painting, to which we owe those masterly productions; and secondly, because the nature of the studies began and perfected in that school, are precisely those most wanting in our own; and this circumstance renders it most desirable that you, upon whose exertions must hereafter depend the maintenance and extension of our good name in art, should at least be clearly impressed with the knowledge of the good those studies promoted.

The object of its Professors was a display of the mind of man through the medium of his bodily form; and for this purpose a dignified employment of one of the great principles of our art, Design, which led them to composition and expression, was their principal instrument. Exercised under the guidance of an exalted spirit of invention, they found this principle effective, though accompanied by an imperfect union of

the other portions of the art, viz. colour, and chiaro-oscuro.

Intent upon effecting this object, to which they were led by the nature of the demands of the church which employed them; engaged in representing scenes, of which all that is most important to man was the theme; they were constrained to adopt this plan of proceeding, as the most efficient for their purpose.

To impress upon the minds of devotees the sacredness, the tenderness, and virgin purity of the mother of the Saviour; the dignity and power of that Saviour, united with his character as peacemaker upon earth; his many acts of mercy and of benevolence; his varied sufferings and his redeeming death; with all the attendant combinations of affliction among his relatives, his friends, and disciples, with the hatred and fury of his foes; were the first important subjects they were called upon to display. Subjects, which, in pictures, obtain the interest they have in the minds of men, accordingly as the varied feelings of all those who were mingled in the scenes they presented were brought to view.

Their aim, then, was direct to this point; and to effect it, they felt, and most justly felt, that drawing or design, was the true, the proper medium.

Now the cultivation of this principle of the art, so directed, and so relied upon, requires exalted views in the artist; compels him to the cultivation and refinement of feeling; calls upon him for the exercise of discrimination and selection; directs him to a close observation of the varied modes in which the feelings of the human mind become manifest in the features of the countenance, and the actions of the body. Hence, it certainly is one, wherein more intellectual power is required, than in attempting to present the mere beauty of arrangement or combination of colours, or determining the proportions and relative positions of light and dark, such as are required for a good adjustment of chiaro-oscuro.

To what purpose, indeed, would such arrangements be wrought, or such adjustments be made, if not circumscribed by form?

It is evident, therefore, that the object of the painters of the Florentine school, was the most elevated and important to which they could direct their attention; and they never relaxed in their efforts till they effectually gained their point. Their enthusiastic pursuit of it was only equalled by their industry; and they were constantly, and most perseveringly engaged in studies from nature. They frequently repeated their sketches of the figures, and the draperies, they were desirous of paint-

ing; improving the actions of their figures, and strengthening and refining the expressions; employing the utmost activity and energy in preparations to enable them perfectly to represent whatever subject was entrusted to their care. And if our own country is ever destined to obtain a great name in art, what better method can be employed by her artists to promote that end, than by adopting their principle recognized as the best; endeavouring to combine with it, whatever beauty may administer to its strength?

Such "*consummation, devoutly to be wished,*" can never be effected, unless, while studying their productions, we endeavour to comprehend the principles which guided them. But to follow their path requires their strength, the same support from knowledge which they possessed. No mere copying will conduct us far on the way. Our best guide, is an emulation of their diligence in seeking the characteristic forms of figures, and of draperies, and of all natural objects; and the most appropriate and agreeable combinations of them; and learning from their labours how to select those parts of objects necessary for the more exalted purposes of art; omitting all that is burthensome in its uselessness.

To comprehend thoroughly this separation of good and evil, so necessary to fine art, which exalts the labours of the painters of the Floren-

tine school, it is needful to understand the whole, that we may know *wherein* the choice resides, and *when* and *wherefore* it should be made. This is the only way to obtain that energy and intensity of character and expression, the best, because the truest tokens of elevated genius; and without it, we can never hope to gain a great name in art.

Such was the result of the labours of the great masters of this, the principal school of art in Italy, and such are the means whereby the knowledge of its principles may be most successfully sought. Its able and successful professors received the highest honours, were exalted by the esteem of the learned, the great, and the good; were rewarded by the munificence of princes, and venerated by succeeding ages; so that their names, and their labours, have been preserved, when those of many able statesmen, and warriors have sunk into oblivion.

May I not say it was just! True, and superior excellence in the art of painting has been at all times rare; and has ever been found united with talents of superior order. The men who have merited and received those high distinctions and rewards, employed their whole lives in the improvement of the age in which they lived, and created sources of gratification and instruction to mankind for ages to come;

and they have not only been eminent as painters, but as men of clear intellect, and sound understanding: nor has such esteem ever been the meed of the vulgar, the ignorant, or the sordid.

They were men, who, though highly gifted by nature, yet laboured earnestly to become possessed of knowledge; which alone gives the power to enchant mankind, in any art; genius, the exciting cause, and enthusiasm, its helpmate.

If there be among you, as I hope there are many, desirous of obtaining that degree of excellence in art, which alone leads to honour, and who feel within them the clear perceptions of genius; let them guard well those seeds of future fame, nourish them with never-ceasing assiduity, and ever-growing acquirements: however bright they may be, however strong in quality, without this care time will tarnish them; the troubles, or the pleasures of the world will weaken their influence, and prevent their development to any useful purpose.

Ancora imparo! said M. Angelo in his old age: Ancora imparo! still I learn, still I strive to know! and thus will every wise man endeavour constantly to improve his store of knowledge, however extended may be its scale.

LECTURE III.

THE HISTORY OF PAINTING.—*Continued.*

1827.

LECTURE III.

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH the great importance, and superior aim of the Florentine school of painting, have hitherto led me to confine your attention to the history of its progress, and the reflections that arose from it, yet others demand our consideration; as it was not there alone that regenerated painting found cultivation and employment.

The same fostering influence, arising from the wealth and the wants of the church, operated throughout all Italy in favour of the art, and extended its practice.

The taste, however, and the style of the great school of Florence, found the most extensive field for its exercise. The whole of the country under the Florentine dominion of course felt the influence of its capital, with Sienna, Pisa, and Rome; but, in others of the then independent States of Italy, as Ferrara, Venice, and other parts of Lombardy, the study and the practice of the art were pursued with va-

rious degrees of union with that school, or deviation from it.

It would be no easy matter to determine which was the most complete aberration from its style; that which engaged the attention of the Venetians as displayed by Giorgione, and Titian; or that of the Lombards, as practised by the great master of their school, Coreggio.

The painting of the Venetians lives in fame by the force of qualities of which the Florentines comparatively knew little or nothing; or, that were united but in a minor degree to their own, by a few of their professors. Those qualities were colouring and a compound chiaro-oscuro; totally diverse from that of Lionardo da Vinci, and composed of certain arrangements of light and dark, or warm and cold colours, and of artificial or imaginary effects of light and shade. Another great quality also marks their better productions, viz., an ingenious management of form in composition; not conducted as by the Florentines, to tell a story sensibly, with attention to propriety and controlled by feeling; but to fill the space they were called upon to cover, as agreeably as possible. And it must be confessed that it was admirably done by some of their better masters; though frequently to the utter loss of even common sense. This was not always the character of the painters of the Venetian school; for at

first they were careful imitators of the renovated style of painting. They attempted to improve it by colour, till the fascinating power of that engaging medium took possession of their minds, and it became their principal object.

This distinguishing quality of the school was first cultivated with effect in Murano, one of the islands that surround Venice; and it was some time practised, before it was transferred to the city itself. There, it gradually acquired strength, till it reached the perfection in which we behold it in the works of the great Venetian masters.

If we seek for the cause of the preference given by the Venetians to the ornamental portions of the art, over the more essential principle of design, as cultivated by the Florentines; we may perhaps find it, in the great influx of wealth to which Venice was so much indebted for her extensive power and influence, from the ninth to the sixteenth century. Engaged in vast mercantile and warlike enterprises, that city became, by conquest and by purchase, the depôt of immense treasures in wrought and costly marbles, and other works of art; though, excepting the renowned horses, and they are not of the finest quality, they were generally of the lower degraded periods. The spoils of Constantinople furnished sufficient to enrich, and

even overload, the rude but imposing architecture of the principal church, St. Mark's; in which the love of richness and costliness, in lieu of good taste is rendered visible, not only by the variety of its splendid display of ancient columns and its windows of painted glass; but also, by the multitude of mosaics with gilded grounds, which almost entirely cover its walls.

It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the splendour of effect obtained by those rich materials, the gold, the coloured glass and marbles, and the semivitrified colours, of which those mosaics are composed, became an object of emulation to the painters of Venice: an effect in perfect consonance with the false taste and the love of show, generated by the influence of the luxury attendant on wealth.

There are existing specimens of painting at Venice which exhibit this quality in a considerable degree of perfection at the beginning of the fourteenth century; and one with the name of its author, Jeronimo à Libris, in the church of St. Georgio, is dated 1326; in which the art is considerably advanced, the colours rich, except those of the flesh.

This peculiar style continued to receive improvement till the two Vivarini, Crivelli, Gentili and Giovanni Bellini, produced colours, almost, if not quite, equal in brilliancy

and depth, and purity, to those of the greater masters; and precisely upon the same system; the colouring of flesh alone excepted. True and pure imitation of the hues and tones of nature in all kinds of objects, was the point to which their attention was directed; but when obtained, they wasted it generally upon poor and insipid forms and materials; and rarely applied it to illustrate character in the human figure, still more rarely expression.

To Giorgione*, to Titian*, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, the school is indebted for the most perfect application of this system of colouring, already prepared.

To the theory which regulates the arrangement of colours in a picture, Giorgione and Titian gave general principles; and they all in varied manners applied well-regulated chiaro-oscuro; a powerful addition to its previously established purity and force of light and shade. To them, also, the Venetian school is indebted for the union of colour to form; form not so correct, not so purified of the vulgarities of common life as by the Florentines, still grand and pleasing, and full of vigour.

To Giorgione and to Titian, landscape painting owes its first efficient introduction to the

* b. 1477.

world of art; and they have presented it to us in its gayest and its gravest characters; Titian more particularly. By them also portraiture was first established on a true and solid basis.

Titian enjoyed by much the longer life, and therefore we have the more numerous body of examples from him; but those of Giorgione, as indeed of both, are simple yet rich, dignified, full of character and truth; and executed with great delicacy and firmness.

Another and, at that time, a novel feature in art, was likewise produced by Giorgione, by his adopting for subjects the engaging scenes of fêtes champêtres; where in full, and free, and rich composition, he employed, as vehicles for the richest colours, the dresses of the noble Venetians. These pictures he composed with great elegance, and finished with the most masterly science. They are the prototypes, of the rich scenes of the like kind, which we have seen from the pencils of Rubens, and Watteau. Scenes of all kinds fell from the hands of Titian, from the simplest, the most domestique, and the most luxurious, to those, the most exalted and sacred; and they are pourtrayed by him, with grace and taste, with fulness and vivacity of colour, but yet with a dignified sobriety of tone and manner, which gives importance to the meanest.

In the race of rivalship between these extraordinary artists, it seems probable, that had Giorgione's life been prolonged, he might have surpassed Titian in splendour and vivacity, both of colour and of execution; but I know no work of his which affords us any decisive means of judging, whether it be probable that he would ever have arrived at the perception of the grand and impressive, as exhibited in the pictures by Titian of the Death of St. Peter Martyr, the David returning Thanks to God for his Victory over Goliath, and others of the like solemn and important subjects.

Had another of the four great Venetian masters I have mentioned, been endowed with a just sense of the value of his own power as an artist, and been less careless of his reputation, he might have rendered the claim of Titian to pre-eminence in this school, doubtful, I mean *Tintoretto* *; a name which excites a compound emotion in the mind, of admiration, with astonishment, and almost disgust. All his pictures manifest an imagination of the brightest quality, accompanied with vast knowledge of the human figure, and of drapery; at the command of an energetic hand, capable of impressing it on the canvass at a stroke: sometimes most happily

* b. 1512.

exerted, at others, with the extreme of folly and absurdity; and it is painful to me to add, most frequently, the latter.

The churches, and the scuole or halls of the different communities of Venice, are overloaded with the productions of his fertile pencil. In the scuola of St. Roch alone, there are sixty pictures by him of sacred subjects; which exhibit a combination of extraordinary power, and weakness in the control of it; or rather an abandonment of the attempt, such as sets all criticism at defiance. The freedom of his execution, and the beauty of his tones of colour, are worthy, as has been said by others, of being added to the grandeur of design of M. Angelo. Indeed, his own style of design is more masterly than Titian's; free and large, and with fine form, acquired by study from the best antique figures, of which he had a large collection of casts. To assist him in producing the extraordinary actions, and views of figures, which we find in his works, he employed small wax models; by means of which, the difficulties attending the design of figures floating in the air, ascending or descending, with the infinite foreshortenings they were subject to, were greatly diminished; and the light and shadow more easily determined. Some of his pictures are of enormous size. The Crucifixion is forty feet long;

and in the Church of Santa Maria del' Orto, there are two, the subject of one being the Worship of the Golden Calf, of the other the Last Judgment, each sixty feet high at least; filled with figures drawn in great style, and painted with powerful colour and execution; but presenting absurdity upon absurdity. With him it would appear, the "firstlings of his heart, or his head, were the firstlings of his hand," and to fill his canvass an object of infinitely more importance than to tell his story. In that power, in that application of the art—that is, in employing composition for the mere purpose of filling a portion of space with beautiful divisions of forms—it must be confessed he is paramount in the Venetian school; and there is one work of his, painted when he was only twenty-eight years old, of St. Mark releasing a Christian slave condemned to death by the Turks, which, for management of colour, and for execution, lays claim to the same honour.

A well regulated judgment will find vast and valuable sources of study in what concerns the art merely, in the rhapsodies of his pencil; for such, in general, is the just character of his pictures. An artist wanting that good quality, will, if he takes them for his guide, find an *ignis fatuus*, which, while it fills his imagination with

joy and with hope, may in the end, 'whelm him in an abyss, from whence to escape will be no easy task.

Nothing like the enthusiasm, which, notwithstanding the glowing defects I have mentioned, fills the mind of an artist when regarding the works of Tintoretto, is derivable from those of Paul Veronese.* His road to fame lay diverse to that of either of the three great masters of whose works I have spoken. Neither does his design, or his colouring, partake of the character of theirs; it is entirely his own: more ornamental, more artificial, more careful, but less true.

Hence it is, that while his paintings please, and even surprise, they do not move the mind to rapture. The ceilings of the Ducal Palace at Venice, bear testimony to his taste and skill. Splendour, and magnificence of form and materials, fill his canvasses in well-arranged composition; and they are conveyed by a steady hand, guided by knowledge, both of the art, and of the materials he employed.

At the same time that the art of painting was so far perfected at Florence in form, and at Venice in colour, it found the third grand requisite to make manifest its entire power, in the school of Lombardy, and at the hands of Coreggio.†

* b. 1532. † b. 1494.

A more ample and more brilliant application of the chiaro-oscuro introduced by Da Vinci, was employed to produce harmony and totality of effect, by that man of original and powerful genius; and he added to it, its natural accompaniment, grace: though it not unfrequently verged upon affectation, or tended to insipidity. His greatest works are his cupolas at Parma. Of these there are two; that of the Duomo, or Cathedral, and that of the Church of St. John the Evangelist. That of the Duomo represents the Assumption of the Virgin: and though it is filled with a multitude of figures brought to an extraordinary degree of relief, yet it appears from below like a rich bed of flowers; not gaudy, but soft and agreeable, and of the most delicate hues. All acts combinedly to produce gaiety and animation; and one may conceive, that when fresh, it must have appeared like a scene in open air. In it is clearly seen the main source of the beauties that adorn the pictures of Sir J. Reynolds. The practical portion of his art is there; his selection and separation of parts, minor and unimportant ones being rejected; his forms and management of drapery, his suavity of tone, and his brilliancy and amenity of colour. However he may have admired the intense feeling displayed by M. Angelo and Raffaelle, his taste

for effect seems to have found a more congenial guide in Coreggio.

The cupola of the Church of St. John the Evangelist was an earlier work, and was painted with more carefulness; as if Coreggio had not then felt his own power, or knew so well how to calculate the effect of distance in giving finish to boldness of stroke. It has the same admirable improvement upon Lionardo da Vinci's scale of chiaro-oscuro, possessing beautiful admixtures of light with light and dark with dark, to produce masses of each, connected and extended through the whole.

This breadth of mass, and largeness (but not refined grandeur) of form, characterise his style of design. Whence he acquired it, is unknown. It was unfelt by any of those to whom he was indebted for instruction in the art; from them, therefore, he could not have drawn it.* But it is most likely, seeing that it is in such perfect accordance with his chosen and pure style of colouring, and his luminous breadth of chiaro-oscuro, that he found it in the necessities of the practice of that style; and that it was principally the offspring of his own mind. The grace and the beauty arising from this homogeneous combin-

* He might have obtained a hint of it from Melozzo da Forli, an artist of whom but little remains, born about twenty years before him.

ation, the amenity and rotundity that it produces, and that hence reign in his works, form the sovereign features of his character as an artist. Depth, sweetness, and purity, dwell in his colouring; and are united in rich impasto, and that mellowness, and harmony, only to be found in works which rival his in those respects, from the hand of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Indeed, it is an agreeable thing to know how much the arrangement of effect in his great cupola, corresponds with the system of painting introduced by that great artist and at present pursued in this country, where breadth of light prevails over breadth of dark. If we admire the vast power of his abilities, in the management of such works as his cupolas, we cannot be less gratified with the beauty and perfection of his art, as seen in his minor productions. The grace, the taste, the exquisite perfection of his colouring and of his execution are seen in his St. Jerome presenting his Translation of the Bible to the infant Saviour; his Nativity, called the Notte; in his Marriage of St. Catherine; or in that beautiful personification of silence, of repose, and contemplation, his Magdalen; they have long commanded the admiration of the world, and must, whilst they endure, continue to do so.

In the three great schools, then, of Florence, of Venice, and of Lombardy, or rather of Parma,

we find the three important principles of painting, brought as near to perfection as probably the hands of man may ever conduct them.

We may, however, indulge the idea, that it is possible to extend their application, and, perhaps, perfect their combination; that they may be applied to objects, and to scenes, diverse in quality from those upon which they were then engaged, and in the management of which, propriety may demand other arrangements, and other proportions of their constituent parts; and thus new art may arise, equally well founded with the old.*

But experience has taught us that there are two kinds of art in painting. The one exhibits nature, the other the artist. There is art, which, as we have seen, has its foundation in the imitation of the varied productions of nature, seen under her varying circumstances; selected to suit the purposes required, and controlled by taste. Such, in their approach to perfection, as we have hitherto seen, was the art of those

* Of this, indeed, we have an example in the works of the Dutch and Flemish schools, yet still the varieties of nature are not exhausted. In them we find a perfect imitation of common life and nature; conducted both on principle and in practice in a mode entirely distinct from those of the schools of Italy: but there also truth acts upon our sympathies; and in opposition to refined feeling, we admire the skill and the dexterity of their artists.

great schools which have so long excited the admiration of mankind; and have, consequently, become models for our imitation. The formation of the art they practised, proceeded upon the purest principles in the selection of natural objects and effects for imitation. But rejecting precise imitation, they substituted in its stead, a chosen model; a portion, characteristic of a whole.

There is also art of a spurious nature, which has its origin in the cultivation of art! of that very art even, which well understood, leads to the excellence we have contemplated.

The former is the acmé of perfection in painting. To this point the aim of the truly great was directed: but this, excellent as it is, bordering, as from its excellence it of necessity does, upon the extreme verge of propriety; pressed beyond its just bounds produced that species of art, which, as I have said, had its origin in the cultivation of art, I now add, to the neglect of nature; rejecting her influence, and not unfrequently in opposition to her dictates: not scrupling to supply forms, and lights, and shades, and colours, in combinations which set at nought all established systems of natural effects, and yet calls itself, or at least has been long imposed upon the world, as of the highest

class! for which I know no other reason, than that it is the most incomprehensible.

On this point Mr. Barry has well observed, that "when an intelligent, and active mind, or genius, finds the general mass of information in his country in a healthful and flourishing state, he leads it to maturity; but when it has passed its point of perfection, the same active vigour and genius still moving forwards, works as effectually in the poisoning and destruction of it, as in the former case it had done in its nurture and cultivation."

Thus it was with most of the artists who followed the career of those great men of whom I have spoken. Their very attempts to improve the practice of art, became the means of corrupting it, and causing its downfall.

But before we conclude, that attempting to improve what had been done, should of necessity have caused the mischief, let us examine the means adopted for that improvement, and see if they were adequate to the proposed end.

The well-earned fame of M. Angelo, acquired by his great labours in sculpture and painting, wrought a total change in the system of Florentine art. The painters, to speak the words of a contemporary author, "regarded him as the presiding Deity of Design;" and their adoration of him went so far, that that excellent

system of study, which had led to such perfection, was no longer thought worthy of attention. Raffaelle was forgotten, and all that had prepared the way for him. Most even of his own pupils, adopted the prevailing style of design, partly, perhaps, from his own example; but they did not, like him, retain sense and feeling, as the basis for its application. In general, style and contrast, become the principal objects of the artists, were no longer the offspring of feeling, but its controllers; as if they were the source of the secret power of M. Angelo: and thus, the instruments of that power, and not the spirit that moved them, assumed the station due only to the superior perceptions of genius.

Hence the decay of the art! Had those painters, gifted as they were with technical power, imbibed the spirit that produced the works they emulated; and then sought to combine with it for their altar-pictures, richer and deeper colour, and varied chiaro-oscuro, suited to the subjects they chose for representation; the excellent in art, might probably have had a prolonged period of existence. As it was, nature forgotten, the extreme of art alone their guide, and affectation having usurped the station of sense and propriety, we cannot wonder that it fell. Yet there were some who upheld it in a superior

manner. Some works were painted of great merit from the designs and under the inspection of M. Angelo himself, and two of them have more particularly obtained admiration; one, the Resurrection of Lazarus, by Sebastian del Piombo, now adorns our National Gallery the other, the Descent from the Cross, by Daniel da Volterra, was painted for the Church of Santa Trinità da Monte, in Rome, and is now in the sacristy*, but sadly injured. It has long been classed as one of the three finest pictures in that great city, that emporium of art: the Transfiguration, by Raffaelle, being another, and the Communion of St. Jerome, by Domenichino, the third.

At Florence, Andrea del Sarto, sought to combine the beauties of Bartolomeo della Porta, with the style of M. Angelo. If he did not quite succeed in the bold endeavour, at least his work is original, and not like that of an ignorant imitator. In the pictures of Andrea, it is not form, but amenity of tone, which is the distinguishing feature.

Gentleness, not beauty, resides in his Madonnas; rarely dignity or grandeur are to be

* It was taken from the walls by the French, and much injured by accidents. It has been repaired, but is become dark in the process, and has lost the fresh look of fresco. Still it is a magnificent ornament to the sacristy of the church, in a chapel of which it was painted.

found in his heads, though those qualities sometimes adorn his figures. Clearness, amenity, and harmony of colour, and very ingenious composition abound in his pictures, with occasionally strong feeling; and render him an agreeable painter, if not a powerful one.

Il Rosso, Bronzino, Puntormo, and some others, upheld the school with more or less of ability; but the most powerful imitator of M. Angelo's style of design, was Pellegrino Tibaldi*, who, with Julio Romano, are the two most remarkable examples of extraordinary power weakened by that vitiating principle of false art, to which I have directed your attention; and their works justify an observation of that great moral philosopher Dr. Johnson, viz. that "*where truth is sufficient to fill the mind, fiction is worse than useless.*"

The works of Tibaldi in the Hall of the Institute of Bologna, which are considered as his finest, exhibit sufficient proof of the observations I have made; and show how necessary it is, for those who would really excel, to turn from the study of even the finest art, to its source in nature. Mr. Fuseli, has well characterised this labour of Tibaldi, as "a singular mixture of extraordinary vigour, and puerile imbecility of

* b. 1577.

conception, of character and caricatura, of style and manner." Allegorical figures, and subjects from the Odyssey, are there blighted by forced contrasts, and extravagant form; but they are executed with a power over design, which merited application to far better matter. Doubtless his knowledge of the figure, and his skill in delineating it were very great, overcoming with ease the most difficult foreshortenings. His colouring in fresco is fresh and pure; producing powerful and agreeable relief. But the enthusiasm with which it is evident these technical portions of the art are presented to us, wanted the regulating principle of good sense; without which, great facility too surely leads to greater imperfection.

In short, the want of that, which made M. Angelo bold, gives to Tibaldi the air of madness; and we turn from the result with sorrow blended with our admiration.

Primaticcio*, and Nicolo del Abate† wrought in the same brilliant and free style of design and composition; masterly but false; able in art, but at variance with nature; and manifesting far more science than feeling; freedom and ease of design, being regarded by them as most worthy of attention.

* b. 1490. † b. 1512.

What Tibaldi, with his great power and real knowledge mistook, or was unable to o'er-master, completely bewildered the minds of the numerous Florentine artists, who, with Vasari, sought to prolong the existence of the style of Michael Angelo, and unite with it grace and taste. But mistaking the manner, for the spirit, they destroyed the reputation of their own school, and brought discredit upon the great name of him whom they sought to honour: for their errors has Michael Angelo, most unjustly, been made accountable.

The style of painting thus adopted by the Florentine school is now become the acknowledged characteristic which separates it from the other schools of Italy; so that whenever that school is mentioned in conversation, allusion is generally made to its practice at this period, to the forgetfulness of its prior and more worthy claims to attention and respect, unless specifically noted; a most unjust triumph of fashion and circumstance over good sense and right feeling.

While this degradation of fine art took place at Florence, another set of artists, with Julio Romano* at their head, adopted the latter style of Raffaelle in form and composition for their

* b. 1492.

model; and thus commenced that class of painting, which has since been called Roman, or of the Roman school.

The principal point wherein it differs from the Florentine is a more strict attention to the forms obtained by study of the Greek sculpture, to which, perhaps, Julio Romano paid a greater, though not so refined a degree of attention as Raffaelle. To him and Francisco Penni, known by the name of Il Fattore, with Pierino del Vaga, and Polidoro da Caravaggio, was intrusted the completion of the paintings designed by Raffaelle for the chambers of the Vatican, and left unfinished at his death.

The assistants whom they retained, adopted their style of course, and became known by the title of the Raffaelleschi; but unfortunately, their leader was endowed with too active and adventurous a spirit and genius, to conduct them in safety. To him, therefore, that passage which I have quoted from Mr. Barry, applies with almost equal force in certain qualities, as to Tibaldi in others; and hence it is, that in this able scholar of Raffaelle we have another species of aberration from truth. It was not easy to fall by imitation of that great master of our sympathies. It was indeed rather by the want of it, by a bold ambitious attempt to unite qualities uncongenial to his mind, with style of design, of which he

had great knowledge, that Julio Romano is rendered liable to the comments I have ventured to make.

His art is great, and would have had greater power, had he, like Raffaelle, been content to convey it in a measured medium; or had the delicacy of his mind, been equal to the vigour of his imagination.

That which he wrought in the Vatican and the Farnesina was from designs by Raffaelle, but in the ducal palace, and in the Palazzo del T. at Mantua*, we find a large mass of his original works, wherein subjects of sublime allegory, and of deep pathos, are treated by him with the hand of a master, in all which relates to poetic fervour and invention in design and composition.

Strong and vivid in conception, and bold and free in execution, he poured forth without labour, as it would appear, the rich treasures of his mind. No wonder that so animated a helpmate should have been regarded by Raffaelle with especial favour. His knowledge of the riches of antiquity, and his acquaintance with cultivated form, tempted his master to leave much in his hands in the stanze of the Vatican; but his boldness, and his looseness, have not increased the value of the designs then intrusted to his exe-

* So called from its vicinity to the Porto del Te, or, del Teatro, from there being a theatre near it.

cution. When compared with Raffaelle's own labours, they rather lead us the more to regret the early loss of that great master; and that during his life, any employment, however honourable, should have withdrawn him from completing that portion of the series which he began.*

Ambitiously desirous of uniting the varied beauties of art, Julio Romano sought to support his poetic fulness of imagination, and his power over design, composition, and expression, by the beauties of colouring and forcible chiaro-oscuro. He might, perhaps, have been led to this attempt, by the success of Sebastian del Piombo†; who, in painting the designs of Michael Angelo, had introduced Venetian colouring to Rome and added it to Florentine expression; not, however, with the truth of Titian, or without manner adverse to natural principles.

But his, is not the excess to which it was carried by Julio Romano, in whose hands it not unfrequently became caricatura. Day and night are commixed in his effects, lights and

* In this respect Michael Angelo has greatly the advantage over Raffaelle. The whole of the ceiling of the Cappella Sistina, is the work of his own hand; and every part therefore is painted in a style and with a spirit of feeling correspondent to the vigour of its invention; but the same accord, unfortunately for Raffaelle, is not found in the chambers, or in the loggie of the Vatican.

† b. 1485.

darks are arranged at will, and often in total violation of the principles of nature. Colours are heaped together of the most vivid hues, such as sunshine or the prism only can produce, accompanied by shades of deeper colour, or of the blackest night; whilst the lights and shadows are frequently interrupted in their course, without any possibility of assigning a reasonable cause. This, then, is another example of that evil art, founded upon art, and at variance with nature, to which I have alluded.

Its brilliancy and vigour have acquired for it too much of applause from that portion of the world which has given its attention to pictures. Its great defects have been overlooked because of the beauties and the power of imagination united with them, but which in reality they obscure or deform.

Such art in its defects, is not like the imperfect imitations of minor matters in the works of the greater masters while pursuing their principal objects. In all those, either the mind is captivated by the mode of treatment in the composition or expression of the subject, and without gross offence in the unpretending qualities of other parts; or the cultivated eye is delighted, by the beauty and arrangement of the colouring; or both are gratified at once. Where either is disturbed, the art is not perfect; where both

are offended, what term shall we apply to that art which produces such an effect, if not unnatural or bad? however alluring may be its accompaniments, or ingenious the handicraft it exhibits!

I have no delight in pointing out thus strongly the defects in the productions of so powerful and original a man of genius, as Julio Romano; and would rather lead you to the admiration, and the emulation, if I could, of his poetic fervour of mind, and his inventive power of composition; his knowledge of the human figure, and his vast skill in the management of draperies; but it is a portion of my duty, and in unison with my instructions, to point out to you the defects of men of renown as well as their merits; to lead you to the knowledge of that which caused the downfall of the art of painting, as well as of that which led to its elevation; and I know not how to afford you a more important or more instructive lesson.

If I should extol the extravagant, how shall I enable you to estimate the just? If I praise the ability with which errors are committed, and am restrained from pointing them out to you as errors, by the beauties which accompany them, I shall by no means give you possession of true knowledge in our art, or direct your course aright to the acquirement of it.

But I shall have great pleasure in returning to

the works of Julio Romano, when I treat of invention, design, and composition, of all which he has left us most admirable examples.

Many other artists, contemporaries of these able men, were like them gifted by nature and by study with the most animated powers of invention and design, and they were liberally encouraged and employed. But there were few who had strength enough to resist the deluge of fashion of the day; which mistaking freedom of hand and vivacity of invention, for fine feeling and good sense, lost the beneficial influence of cultivated taste in the pursuit of its shadow.

Francesco Mazzuolo, called il Parmeggiano*, offers us a different subject for reflection. He was not of the Florentine school, but self-educated at Parma, and at Rome. He endeavoured to combine the great excellences of the styles of Michael Angelo and the antique, with that of Coreggio. With what great success he effected this laudable object is seen in his figure of Moses in the church of the Steccata at Parma; and you have an opportunity of judging for yourselves by the study of that fine production of his pencil, the vision of St. Jerome; which the members of the British Institution, actuated by the most liberal and laudable feeling, have presented to our National Gallery.

* b. 1503.

His art is original, and distinctly his own. Less an imitator than a rival of his countryman Coreggio, he surpassed him in style of design; but is far unequal to him in his chief characteristics, suavity, and breadth of colour, of harmony, and of chiaro-oscuro.

The colour and style of Coreggio were more nearly imitated by Bernardino Gatti * (his pupil) in the cupola of the church called the Steccata at Parma. The subject of this work is the same as that of his master in the Duomo; and the principle of its plan is an imitation of it, though not a copy: and had Gatti known how to have been content with fewer figures in his composition, and thus have avoided the confusion which prevails in this vast production, it had proved a powerful rival to that of Coreggio.

Schidone † imitated the impasto, and sometimes the colour, of the great founder of the Lombard school; Baroccio ‡ his form and composition in his minor productions; and in one instance, the Descent from the Cross in the Cathedral at Perugia, he rose to style and pathos. But in general the grace which he attempted to display is lost in insipidity, and his colouring is tinted and artificial.

That which he produced, however, stimulated another, and far more able artist of the Floren-

* b. 1575. † b. 1560. ‡ b. 1528.

tine school, to study the works of Coreggio; and led him to burst the bonds of thraldom under which lay the mistaken imitators of Michael Angelo.

Such was the course adopted by Ludovico Carli, called Da Cigoli *, who then turning to nature, endeavoured to extract fresh beauties from that genuine source of all that is excellent, and combine them with the varied and great qualities of art. We have but few of his productions here; but in the Pitti Palace at Florence there are two, a Descent from the Cross, and an Ecce Homo, which testify the propriety of his attempt, and the power of his pencil. The inequality of their parts manifest, however, the difficulty of the task he undertook.

His colouring and his chiaro-oscuro are extremely rich and powerful in quality; but the forms and expressions of his figures are too nearly allied to common nature, for suitable application to such subjects.

Another and a better colourist even than he, was Jacopo Chimenti, or Da Empoli †, whose forms also were of better taste; and from these two, in conjunction with their contemporary, Ludovico Caracci, may be dated the second regeneration of the art of painting in Italy. Perhaps we may add that Michael Angelo Da

* b. 1559. † b. 1554.

Caravaggio, the Opie of the Roman school, also contributed not a little, by the originality, the boldness, and breadth of his light and shade, and close adherence to the forms of nature.

The Venetian school, founded upon a basis less firm than the Florentine, or the Lombard, but more applicable to ornamental purposes, was very ably sustained for a time by several skilful painters; among whom the principal ones were Bonifaccio, Paris Bordone, the two Palmi, the Bassani, Pordenone, and Salviati, who, though a Florentine by birth and education, yet adopted the composition and colour of the Venetian school.

The former, Bonifaccio*, was undoubtedly the most perfect colourist amongst them; one whose pictures constantly pass current for those of Giorgione; whilst Paris Bordone†, as frequently occupies the place of Titian, though in general with a minor claim to respect. Here, however, as at Florence, the weaker minded members of the school adopted the style, the spirited execution, and the splendid arrangement of materials dictated by art, rather than those pointed out by nature; and followed the track of Tintoretto, and P. Veronese, rather than that of Titian.

Hence, at Venice, the same effect ensued of discredit and degradation to the art, as at Flo-

* b. 1491. † b. 1513.

rence; and its churches are consequently crowded with pictures, skilfully wrought, indeed, but exhibiting the most senseless splendour, and the most ostentatious absurdities.*

Thus we find corresponding causes producing the same effects, in each of the three great Italian schools of painting; in their decline, as in their advancement; and I repeat the observation I have before made, that, as in their advancement we saw attention to truth and nature, and an endeavour to excite emotion in the mind, were the causes of excellence in the art; the rules, or the principles by which it is regulated, being made subservient to that end; so likewise we find, that the permitted control of these principles of art over the dictates of nature;

* It is a remark worthy of attention, that the art of painting arose to perfection in the different schools at the same time, and fell almost simultaneously also; and it has been made a question, whence that happened; which has not perhaps yet received a better answer than is afforded by an observation of Lanzi. He says, "that it appeared to him, that men at certain periods of time, or ages, form certain maxims, which are universally received by professors and dilettanti; and which, when they are true and just, form at the same time some extraordinary professors, and many good ones. Change those maxims, as human instability is liable to do, and the character of the age changes also."

This sentiment I think fully confirmed, when we consider the line of conduct adopted by the Italian artists, after the truly great had presented their labours to the world.

and the adoption of mere style and ornament for the guide, instead of character and sentiment, were the sources of its decay.

This is a point well worthy the serious consideration of all artists, in the existing situation of the art, and of the patronage with which it is honoured in our country; but more particularly for you, young gentlemen, lest your growing efforts should take a wrong direction; lest you should, like many of the older and able artists of whom I have spoken, mistakenly conceive yourselves obtaining substantial fame, and adding to the improvement of the art, while in fact you may be hastening its ruin; blighting your own prospects, and misleading the growth of taste in your country, by a display of mere manual dexterity, and a vivid imagination, instead of sense and thought; controlled by the science, and not the soul of art.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has justly observed, "that mistake, and prejudice, when neglected, gain ground upon truth and reason." How necessary is it, then, to guard against mistake, lest it lead to prejudice! And in no season of life is it so necessary as in the period of youth; when the judgment is immature, when experience cannot have afforded her beneficial influence; and when the adopted course of study gives a bias to the whole product of remaining life.

The history of the art of painting has now led us to that period, when mistake and prejudice had far overpowered reason in all which related to it, till at length excess of error became manifest and promoted its own correction.

We have seen a few artists returning to nature, and claiming assistance from her to the amendment of art. With some of them, however, selection was wanting; and as they imitated too closely the ordinary forms of nature, the opposing scale of taste consequently descended too low. The Caracci* endeavoured to regulate it; and by their abilities, and exertions, the great school of painting was transferred from Florence, to Bologna.

The principle upon which the Caracci proceeded, was an attempt to combine the excellences of the three great schools we have contemplated: a principle which has been productive of much diversity of opinion among men of powerful talent.

The endeavours of the greatest masters of the Florentine school to obtain as much of it as they could, is an evidence in its favour. Even Michael Angelo did not disdain it! For what purpose did he court the assistance of able colourists, Sebastian del Piombo and others, to paint from

* Ludovico, b.1555. Agostino, b.1558. Annibale, b.1560.

his designs; if it were not, that he thought an union of fine colour, with fine form, a desirable object? Raffaelle in all his labours sought to obtain it; and that he did not more completely effect that purpose was perhaps more owing to his attention having been withheld from it by the principal course of his study, and the want of effective examples before him, than to any other cause.

His friend and instructor, Fra. Bartolomeo, actually did display the combination of form, colour, and chiaro-oscuro with great success. But I shall not, at present, press the subject farther, as I shall be compelled to return to it, at a future time.

Truth obliges me to say, that the Caracci, skilful and powerful as they were in academical acquirements appertaining to their art, did not in their own practice fully substantiate their theory.

Ludovico approached the nearest to it; but it appears, I think, from an examination of their productions, that there must have been some controlling influence over them, which it is not now easy to fathom, which led them to an artificial, and not a natural combination of their chosen qualities; to answer some given purpose, perhaps, too subtle for fine painting, and adverse to the union they proposed to themselves to

form. Their light and shade are not those of Coreggio; nor their colours an imitation of nature, such as Titian produced; they did not exhibit the powerful activity of the pencil of Tintoretto, nor the grace and purity of Raffaelle; yet such were their pretensions, and more; but the breadth of Coreggio and Titian, the zeal and imagination of Tintoretto, and the high and delicate qualities of Raffaelle, or the style and intense feeling of Michael Angelo, are not exemplified in their works; and they rarely captivate the imagination; never excite the senses to that delicious emotion, which all the rest produce in their turn, though so different in their qualities.

Whence is this, is their system wrong, or are they in fault? is an enquiry worthy of the attention of the artist and the connoisseur.

That they understood the human figure admirably is displayed with great effect in their labours. Excellent composition was in their power, and great intelligence in the management of the whole material of the art of painting; producing clearness of colour, and brilliancy and depth of light and dark.

The latter quality, however, they too frequently carried to excess; it renders their more serious and more important pictures dark and heavy; and is, if I mistake not, the main preventive of

their entire success, as far as the mechanical part of the art is concerned.

Possibly they were led to it, by conceiving that it gave solemnity appropriate to the purposes of the altar; for which their pictures were chiefly produced. But it will appear, that the Caracci carried their principle too far, when we consider how great a number of pictures are serious and impressive in their effect, without this fictitious aid. One instance will suffice, the St. Peter Martyr, by Titian.

The greatest work of Annibal, the ceiling of the Farnese gallery, upon which he expended all the force of his academical acquirements, is a display of immense practical power. Skilful composition, admirable drawing, and clear, but false, colouring prevail in it: unity of subject, or any subject indeed productive of interest, was unthought of; or if we give him credit for one, it was one unsuited to the mansion of an elevated dignitary of the church: and it excites no other sensation, than admiration of the skilful and laborious talents of its author. More mechanism and less mind, more ingenious artifice and less valuable art, distinguish it from that work which it principally emulates, the ceiling of the Sistina, and no less so, from the labours of Raffaelle in the Farnesina, and in the chambers of the Vatican.

It has none of their powerful influence on the mind; once well seen it is all seen: no depth of thought lies under its surface; and we do not wish, as with them, to return to it again and again. It is however the perfection of execution and finishing in fresco; it is gay and cheerful, and highly ornamental; though crowded overmuch. It admirably exemplifies what industrious ingenuity may do, even when that true spirit of genius which excites to works touching to the heart, awakening our sympathies, and improving our minds, lies dormant. Of the force of expression, both Ludovico and Agostino were more highly endowed than Annibale. The former, has more frequently exhibited it, and you find him mentioned with admiration in the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds for his serious and true historic tone of colour. Agostino, who was in fact the most able man of the three, devoted so much of his time to superintendence of the school and to engraving, that we cannot be surprised if, in the mechanical part of the art, he was unequal to the others. Annibale, the most accomplished in that particular point, often gives us beautiful colour; and sometimes in his minor works, though it is by no means his general characteristic, exquisite touches of feeling: in none more than in that excellent picture of the Maries lamenting over the dead body of the Saviour;

now at Castle Howard, but formerly in the Orleans collection.

He vainly attempted to follow Titian in ideal landscape, but remained at an immense distance behind him. His forms in that class of pictures are artificial and his colouring most frequently untrue; and though clear and brilliantly executed, they fail to excite the sentiment inspired by those which he emulated; or the subsequent productions of Nicolo Poussin.

Guido Reni*, Albano†, Domenichino‡, Lanfranc§, and Guercino‖, the most conspicuous among the pupils of their school, adopted each as much of the practice of the Caracci, as suited their individual tastes and purposes; created their own systems, and maintained more or less distinguished stations in the art.

The most specious talent and the most pleasing to the eye, was Guido's; but the strongest and most effective, lay in the mind of Domenichino. Guido exhibited his taste and capacity in his youth; Domenichino's powers were slowly but gradually developed. The peculiar qualities of both are well illustrated by that contrast of their pictures in the oratory of St. Andrew, adjoining the church of San Gregorio at Rome;

* b. 1574. † b. 1578. ‡ b. 1581.
§ b. 1581. ‖ b. 1590.

and by the story of an old woman overheard by Annibal Caracci commenting upon the picture by Domenichino, and pointing out to a girl the strong expressions of the feelings which actuated the different figures in it; whilst, looking earnestly for a time at Guido's, she passed it by in silence. Caracci's own observation was, that Guido's appeared truly the work of a master, and Domenichino's of a scholar, but of a scholar who knew more than the master; and Poussin testified his approbation of it by not only choosing to copy it rather than Guido's, but by persuading others to do the same.

The former of the two pictures of course received the applause of the multitude, the latter of the few more wisely critical; who went qualified to feel, where there was matter to excite.

Such was the just triumph of feeling, though displayed in imperfect colour and execution, over the more ornamental portion of the art. But let me not be misunderstood. It is not of so great a master of that which is graceful and beautiful in the art of painting as Guido, that I would wish to speak with disrespect.

We have to choose between two great and estimable qualities in the art; and I but prefer those efforts of the mind which are directed to the highest degree of perfection in its application, whilst I am not insensible to the value

of that which I feel compelled to place in the second rank. It must not be forgotten that those graces, and that taste of line and of execution, cultivated with such success by Guido, form no small portion of the source of that pleasure and gratification which the art of painting is capable of affording. 'Tis true, his figures have frequently the air of the dancing-school, or of the theatre, where affectation often supersedes propriety; yet they are arrayed in such excellent and elegant forms of drapery, and rendered so engaging by free and perfect dexterity of hand in execution, that they command our attention and control for a time our senses. Great pathos is occasionally found in his expressions. His Madonnas have sometimes a more grand and more beautiful character than those of Raffaelle; and are painted with a celestial purity of hue, which adds greatly to the sentiment inspired by their expression. The character of the head, and the appropriate expression of the suffering Saviour of mankind, has been by no one, unless it be Lionardo da Vinci, rendered with more affecting influence than by Guido.

In colouring he is occasionally vigorous and rich, and always pure; but apt to be cold and inharmonious. His style was varied: its native tone is given by a picture in the Museum at Bologna, painted when he was only twenty

years of age, and it is similar to that of his more delicate productions. At a later period, when the works of Caravaggio found favour at Rome, Guido for a while attempted to rival them; which he did with great power, but not entire success.

The triumph of Domenichino lay in colour, and in pathos. His large work of the Crucifixion of St. Andrew, in Santa Maria degli Angeli, at Rome; his Demoniac Boy, at Grotto Ferrata; and his Communion of St. Jerome, in the Museum of the Vatican, place him above all the scholars of the Caracci and among the most excellent in art. The charm which overpowers the heaviness of his execution, arises from a manifestation of good sense, which led him to give just and strong expression; and to maintain a total freedom from affectation.

One class of subjects, however, he undertook, for which his mind seems to have been ill qualified; such are the gigantic single figures of the Evangelists, and others of an allegorical character, in some of the churches in Rome; and they are consequently deficient in that appropriate ideal character, conveyed by Michel Angelo in his figures of the like kind.

Albano's province was more confined than either, and his style tender and agreeable, but of no great strength.

Guercino, is bold and skilful: but ungraceful,

and inharmonious; whilst Lanfranc lavished to excess the charms of bravura in design and execution, in heterogeneous masses of allegorical allusions, or mystic scenes, on the domes of churches, or the ceilings of palaces. These he wrought with great skill; but they interest only by the ingenuity with which they are performed, and the ornamental effect which it must be confessed they possess.

He was succeeded in the same career, by the ready invention, and the ingenious legerdemain of Pietro da Cortona*, which gave the general tone of the art, down to the time of Carlo Maratti† and Luca Giordano.‡ The same bravura of execution, operated also upon Salvator Rosa§; but the originality of his choice of matter and appropriate manner, and the unity and totality of his arrangements, deservedly rescue his works from the neglect into which others have fallen.

The attempt made by Francis I. of France, to transplant the art of painting from Italy to his own country, by inviting Lionardo da Vinci to his court, and employing Primaticcio, with Nicolo del Abate, at Fontainbleau, where they adorned the great ball-room and the gallery with a number of spirited compositions, was not followed by any successful issue. But few painters of note arose till the time of Nicolo Poussin; and he, though born in France and

* b. 1596. † b. 1625. ‡ b. 1632. § b. 1615.

educated as a painter under Simon Varin, ought rather to be ranked as an Italian; since it was by drawing from prints after Raffaelle, that he first formed his taste; and in Italy, that he imbibed the real culture of an artist and fixed his abode. If he returned to France for a time at the especial desire of the king, it was but to learn, that the art which he had so eagerly sought, and had so ably and wisely cherished, was uncongenial to the minds of his countrymen.

He hastened, therefore, to leave the honours and pecuniary advantages proffered to him, and on his arrival bestowed upon him by the court, with the mortifications and troubles which accompanied them; and returned to the happy enjoyment of his more grateful, and tranquil, though less profitable studies at Rome.

Nicolo Poussin * merits a station in the class of original painters; of those who extended the application of the art, if not its mechanical power. Raffaelle and Julio Romano had preceded him in study from the remnants of antiquity, but Poussin's perception of the use that might be made of them was totally distinct from theirs; and, if less grand, not less imaginative. It was also more strictly imitative of ancient forms, customs, dresses, and appropriate scenery; of all which he has left us a most useful

* b. 1594.

display. Though he drew the principal part of his materials from the works of ancient times, and his combinations of them from the inspirations of the poetry and mythology of the same period; yet those combinations are so just, the incidents, and accompaniments so well chosen, and exhibited with such an air of truth, that the invention is truly his own; as distinct from those of other men, as are the works of Michel Angelo.

He endeavoured to recall the attention of the artists, and the people of France and Italy to the study of pure art; but, except on the minds of Eustache le Sueur*, and Sebastian Bourdon†, his countrymen, the call was vain. The glow of pomp and a flourishing and luxurious display of the power of the pencil, had gained ground in both countries; and the more simple dictates of sense and propriety were unattended to. The art, in fact, had again become the object of attention, to the abandonment of wisdom in the application of it. His historical pictures, properly so called, are founded upon the perception of the value of truth. Perhaps it may be said that he pursued incident too far, and over-laboured the illustration of a fact; and there can be no doubt, that sometimes it is the case, and reflection seems to have constrained his imagination in too great a degree. Yet even then, the evil is not, that

* b. 1617. † b. 1616.

affectation found its way into his pictures, but only a superfluity of true imagery; embarrassing, indeed, to the observer, abstracting his attention from the main end of the picture, and, consequently, in opposition to the dictates of good taste.

The landscapes of Nicolo Poussin, transcripts of the districts in the neighbourhood of Rome, or of the mountains that bound the Campagna, convey in their arrangements and tones of colour a full sense of the dignified perceptions of his mind. The grandeur of their forms, the well-regulated union of their parts, and the depth and richness of their tones of colouring, never fail to impress us with elevated ideas, and supply us with poetic imagery.

But though thus much was effected by Poussin in landscape, as had been done before him by Titian, yet it was reserved for another Frenchman to add the ultimate polish to that class of art, and give the true effect of atmospheric influence over the preconceived grandeur and beauty of form.

To Claude Gelée de Lorraine* we are indebted for this great improvement. He, like Poussin, made Italy his place of abode, and thence drew his scenery and there cultivated

* b. 1600.

his taste. His eye seems to have been imbued with a most exquisite sense of the true beauty of aërial tint and its gradations, and his mind possessed of a consciousness of its utility; which enabled him to spread it around every object he introduced into his pictures, with every possible and appropriate degree of variety: be it on the foreground, in the middle, or the extreme distance.

No school of art dictated rules to him, unless it were in composition. The country was his study; and the objects around him and the effects produced upon them by the varied illumination of morning, noon, or evening, were his guides; which he obeyed or controlled, as best suited his purpose: not imitating servilely what he saw, but employing it as a regulator of his taste whilst composing his splendid assemblages of select forms of natural objects; adorned with remnants of ancient architecture, or the more recent and rich inventions of that art.

His pictures are therefore completely original, without a prototype in art; and we may proudly boast, that if he has had successors, whose works rival his in his peculiar sphere, they must be sought for in our own country.

The poetical and ingenious combinations made by Poussin, of landscapes with figures illustrative

of historical subjects, were best imitated by Sebastian Bourdon.* Interested and moved by the touches of feeling and grandeur of imagery which we see in his pictures, we lament that they want breadth and keeping; are frequently inharmonious in their colouring, and deficient in aerial tint; so that he is seen to most advantage in the prints which have been made from them.

Philip de Champagne†, and Mignard‡, exhibited great power, but Le Sueur best pursued the track of Poussin in history, felt like a man of fine and elevated mind, and merited the title bestowed upon him, of the French Raffaelle. His series of pictures from the history of St. Bruno now in the Louvre, much more nearly approach the character of good Roman art, and possess more of its power than any work produced by his contemporaries; except by Poussin. Nor were those pictures the only testimonies he gave of his capacity. But the unpretending style of Le Sueur, interesting as it was, was not destined to receive support from the tide of patronage then in full effect in his country; it flowed with more congenial and fertilising influence over the exuberant abilities of Le Brun.§ His luxuriant imagination covered the ceiling of the gallery of Versailles, with rich and ornamental combin-

* b. 1616. † b. 1602. ‡ b. 1603. § b. 1619.

ations of well-arranged forms, and all the captivating machinery of the art suited to the atmosphere of the court; but yet in a style far superior in sense and taste to the works of the later masters of the Italian schools.

That great work, with his large pictures of the battles of Alexander, testimonies of his power over the materials of the art, established his name as the great hero of the florid style of painting in France; and his manner, became the subsequent standard of the art in that country to the period of its political revolution. Jouvenet* and others pursued it with success; and produced pictures of great skill. But when we have seen the more firmly rooted bases on which were raised the glories of Italian art give way to the baneful influence of flourish and affectation; we cannot be surprised to find, that it was not long ere this, which began upon a weaker ground of security, sunk into flimsiness and flutter; such as we find it in the hands of subsequent artists, as Van Loo†, Boucher‡, &c., till the country which reared it, felt ashamed of its weakness and abandoned it.§

* b. 1644. † b. 1705. ‡ b. 1704.

§ From these observations must be rescued the name of Watteau, a painter of original taste in subject, and in execution of the most rich, free, and decided and beautiful character.

It is not necessary, neither perhaps would it be decorous in me here, to enter into a discussion of the present system of painting in France, or that which has arisen upon the abandonment of former taste. You have works sufficient before you to form your own opinions; referring, as you ought to do, to nature, and the higher principles of the art, as the guides of your judgments.

LECTURE IV.

THE HISTORY OF PAINTING — *Continued.*

1827.

LECTURE IV.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my former lectures I have directed your attention to the rise and fall of the art of painting in Italy, and its introduction into France; where it was cultivated in a style derived from the ornamental works of the later Italian painters of the seventeenth century.

I have now to bring forward for your consideration another style of the art, totally distinct from either in the principles upon which it was conducted, and the manner of its execution; and therefore, though the commencement of its career was nearly coeval with that of Italy, I have thought it best to discuss its history and its qualities, apart; and have hitherto but slightly alluded to it.

The art I speak of, is that which was practised in Holland, in Flanders, and in Germany; but principally in the two former.

Though the object proposed for its attainment, was like that of the schools of Italy, the adornment of the altars in the churches and convents, and the like ecclesiastical influence was exer-

cised for its support; yet the means adopted for its cultivation, were drawn from a less elevated source, were accompanied by feelings totally different from those of the Italians, and were more nearly allied to the common and ordinary perceptions of mankind. Consequently, though this peculiar practice of painting became rich, and even splendid in colouring and chiaro-oscuro, and exhibited a most extensive mastery over the materials it employed; it never, or but in few instances, attained an exalted degree of propriety in its application; or of perfection in grandeur or purity of form, or dignity and correctness of expression.

Perhaps this may in a considerable degree be accounted for, from the earlier painters of Germany not having had the advantage which was enjoyed by the Italians, of contemplating the remains of ancient Greek or Roman sculpture. Giotto is known to have availed himself of such aid, though but few marbles were preserved in his time, and those, not of the highest quality. He also had the advantage of seeing the use which the sculptors, Nicolo, and Andrea Pisano, made of them; how they simplified form, and gave it rotundity, and fulness. Thus painting and sculpture grew up together in Italy; nurtured by the same principles, as far as related to form and composition.

The painters of Germany were not thus favourably circumstanced. Their country had never been exalted by attention to refined art in ancient times, and its inhabitants knew little of that of Italy. Association between the different countries of Europe was not, in the thirteenth century, quite so easy of attainment as at the present time, nor had engraving then become known: an art that subsequently disseminated the knowledge of the productions of painting, and spread it abroad through regions far remote from civilised Italy. Another circumstance favourable to the cultivation of painting among the Italians, which has at no time been enjoyed by the Germans, arose from their artists having been early engaged upon works in fresco. The practice of that peculiar class of art does not admit of so much attention to minutiæ, as may be given to pictures painted in body water-colours, the early system for the execution of small works; or in the richer and more powerful effects of colours mixed with oils, which superseded it. By means of fresco, which will not allow of long-continued labour, or of re-painting, the Italians were led, at a very early period, to see how much might be dispensed with in imitation, and still satisfy the mind; whilst in the other modes, the comparative facility of practice, and the

command which the painter possessed over his materials, tempted to minuteness; and almost inevitably conducted the early artists to meanness.

The Germans, and the Flemings were thus compelled to draw upon their own resources, under the influence of that power of invention, which received its stores from the ordinary intercourse of life. They had also to contend with the vulgar prejudices of mankind, ere they could direct their attention to other, than that servile imitation of nature, always the favoured object of uncultivated, or ill-cultivated minds.

Hence it arose, that their perception of the true beauty of form, was inferior to that entertained by the early Italians; and hence also it arose, that this want of refined taste of form in their paintings, is too often accompanied by a want of purity in the choice of materials properly belonging to their subjects; and their works are frequently degraded by imagery trite and common place, to say the least of it. Ordinary forms and characters combined with common and vulgar incidents and actions, are too often selected to occupy conspicuous stations; and when such things are introduced into pictures of serious subjects, they attract the mind from the contemplation of the real point of interest.

In the midst of all this repulsive matter there is a redeeming power, to the eye of an artist, in

the beauty and purity of their colouring, in which we find hues of the most refined quality; thus exhibiting an interesting contrast to those works of Giotto, and of the older Florentine artists, to which I have so earnestly directed your attention; and justifying in some degree the higher estimation which has been attached to them by common observers.

In the works of the Italians the thoughts, and not the handicraft, interest and engage the mind of the sensible observer; whilst in the German works, the beauty of the handicraft and the power over the materials, are the objects of attraction: although, not even their utmost degree of beauty, has influence enough, oftentimes, to screen from contempt the thoughts which they are employed to illustrate.

Bursts of better feeling were occasionally manifested; and as in the minds of men undirected by rules, strong and glowing perceptions of native vigour, will sometimes appear, and excite a powerful interest by the ideas they convey; so it happened among the early painters of Flanders and Germany. Some ingenious minds pourtrayed figures expressive of lofty feeling, and maintained great delicacy and fulness of expression, with admirable composition; though alloyed by the dross of vulgar and ordinary form.

The specimens of old Greek painting which

about the end of the thirteenth century found their way into Germany or Flanders, gave no insight into the true beauty of art; but rather indeed, rendered darkness visible. It was not so, however, with regard to the use of the materials of the art; on that point powerful instruction might be obtained from them; and the hints they afforded were not lost upon the artists of either of those countries. The earliest of their works which remain, are consequently, all clear and pure in their hues and tones of colour.

In design, they appear to have acted, as though they had begun the practice of the art entirely anew; with all the meagreness and poverty of line generated by the want of knowledge of *that* which constitutes beauty, in nature or in art.

Very little indeed is satisfactorily known of their early painters, whose works nevertheless are numerous, till we find Van Eyck, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, exciting the attention of the artists of Italy, by the excellence and the purity of his painting in oil.

It is now made very clear, that he was not the first, as Vasari has reported, who practised painting with colours mixed with oil; but I think it may fairly be supposed, that the mode he invented, or the material he prepared, was

productive of an effect more perfect than had then appeared in Italy; and it is so perfect, that to this day the colours he employed, retain an extraordinary degree of freshness and force. It is the same with the works of those who succeeded him. We see it in the pictures of Ouwater, Hemmelinck, Mabeuse, and many others: but except in Hemmelinck with a lower and more degraded taste. Hemmelinck, often gave exquisite examples of delicacy and feeling, and Martin Schoen still more. In his series of the life and suffering of the Saviour, of which there are prints by himself, we find strong perceptions of real character, but displayed in a manner too common and vulgar for historical art; totally wanting that refinement which should accompany all things whose proper aim is to excite the mind to elevated feeling.

By these men, the way was prepared for the inventive, and active genius of Albert Durer. As excellent in mind, as he was beautiful in person, he added greatly to the honour of the art in his country; not only by his paintings, but by his engravings, and writings.

But it is to his painting that I have to direct your attention; and in that, you will find, fine thoughts, and high indications of sense and sensibility: sometimes pourtrayed with fulness of power, and at others merged, and almost lost in

meanness of style. He studied the proportions of the human figure, and has left us his thoughts upon the subject: but so problematical, so involved with perplexing diagrams, is his work, that it is ill-suited for application to general purposes. It remains a guide for instruction to teachers, rather than to learners; as it exhibits the necessity of simplification in the means employed for instruction.

Original thought and feeling mark his productions, both in matter and manner; and though it is true that he did not invent a style in which to present them to the world, at least he improved largely that which had preceded him. Not indeed to the degree that Raffaelle improved upon his precursors; but still in such a degree, as to make his name honourable among his countrymen; and call upon Raffaelle himself for respect, which he willingly granted. His conception of the figure of Melancholy, M. Fuseli acknowledged, "needed little more to render it sublime." His Warrior steadily and firmly advancing, though death spreads his terrors before him, and malignant demons attempt to dismay him; is conceived with originality, and manliness of thought, and with poetic fervour, worthy of Ariosto or of Spencer. His Caiaphas rending his clothes, is depicted with full propriety of character; and thus might I proceed to direct your atten-

tion to many other instances of excellence in the multitude of his productions, and call upon you for admiration.

With due respect therefore to so great an authority in criticism, as M. Fuseli, I feel desirous of restoring the claim of genius to one who was so capable of receiving vivid impressions from natural effects; of retaining and combining them with novelty, and imparting them with ingenuity; though encumbered by peculiarities, not accordant with the subsequent acquirements and improvements of taste.

He frequently, it must be acknowledged, indulged in extravagant and quaint conceits, yet in the midst of them impresses us with sentiment! Beauty and deformity are perhaps more blended in his labours than in those of any other man: grandeur and meanness are there found side by side.

His colouring was admirable in hue and in tone. He did not attain a management of general chiaro-oscuro; that science adorned the school at a later period: but he frequently produced powerful effects in parts.

His command of line, and his mastery over the pen, and the pencil, was of the most extraordinary kind, and may be seen in a work (not long since published) called his Prayer Book, the original of which is in the great library at Munich.

The costume of his figures informs us of his want of refined taste and of classical knowledge in works of art; the dresses he employed were those of his own time and country, wherever the scenes of his pictures were laid. In his draperies, which are commonly full, the general directing line of the foldings is fine and flowing; oftentimes elegant, or grand; but it is broken, and as M. Fuseli has admirably expressed it, snapt and abrupt in its minor parts, and too much involved.

Whatever were his defects, his skill and his beauties in composition and in colour, as well as in feeling and sentiment, were not surpassed, nor equalled, unless sometimes by Lucas Van Leyden, or by Holbein, till the knowledge of Italian art was spread in Germany through the medium of prints; and the artists of that country, as well as those of Flanders and Holland, were stimulated to attempt a rivalry with it.

The excess to which man is prone when novel ideas invade the mind, and a vivid imagination prevails unaccompanied by that knowledge which is the foundation of sound judgment, is perfectly exemplified, in the course then adopted by the German and Flemish painters.

Unacquainted with the principles of beauty, and true excellence, and brought at once to the contemplation of the extreme of its power, they

were unable to penetrate to its source; and do not appear to have extended their enquiries further, than the surface of the models they chose for their imitation.

But, if the ingenuity of Pellegrino Tibaldi failed to produce true and effective imitation of the works of Michael Angelo, or the vast ability of Julio Romano, those of Raffaelle; what must be said of the works of Coch, of Ponts, of Goltzius, Sprangher, De Vos, Van Ath, and a host who followed them! who excited by the same desire with Tibaldi, and emulous of the same taste, produced those extravagant, yet skilful effusions of misconception, and conceit; those extreme contrasts in redundancy of line and affectation of grace, to the meagreness that preceded them, even in the works of Albert Durer: but given with a total abandonment of his sense, and his power over expression.

For a time this evil, this baneful abuse of fine art, occasioned ruin to the taste of the countries which generated it; as it spread widely in them, and pervaded the whole of their productions. But in the changeable course of human events, good arose from that evil. The total change from meagreness to fulness of form, was in itself a vast advantage; and the introduction of large and flowing lines, in skilful combinations, which almost immediately followed, but in

an exaggerated style, was by degrees deprived of much of its excess.

Goltzius even produced some works of excellent quality, and void of his general characteristic extravagance. Bloemart, Van Oort, Breughel, and Otho Venius, all moderated, but still maintained the novel style, till from their hands it gave rise to the glowing labours of Rubens; which, if not in correctness, if not in the chastened purity of Greek, or high Italian art, at least in the wide range of the executive power and the brilliancy of imagination displayed in them, rival those of the highest and the best.

It is a peculiar quality of genius, to extract from the labours of extravagance, the germs of its vigour; correcting its errors by the application of solid sense, and the principles of good taste.

Thus did Rubens! The very excess of line, and of rich contrasts in colour, and brilliancy of effect which were before him, formed the basis of that magnificent and luxuriant display of art by which he honoured, and has enriched his country; and commanded the admiration and esteem of his own, and of succeeding ages.

It is of no avail that we say, and may say with truth, that it wants the grace and refined feeling of Raffaelle, or the purified energy of the

finer works of M. Angelo: still the dazzling and controlling power of his genius over all the region of the art, authorises our placing him by the side of the greatest masters.

Born, like Michael Angelo and Titian, in an elevated sphere, and educated as a scholar and a gentleman; Rubens, like them, adopted the art of painting for his profession, in opposition to the wishes of his relations; a third example, of high born names rescued by the art of painting, from the oblivion that might otherwise have awaited them, and rendered memorable among men.

Rubens received his first professional instruction in the practice of painting, from Van Oort, and Otho Venius; and cultivated his native talents with a degree of power, which soon obtained for him patronage and fame. In Italy, he corrected his taste, without destroying his native feeling; remaining, like Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of the few examples transmitted to us of the true mode of profiting by the labours of others; preserving his own originality of thought, and combining with its productions, whatever he felt compatible with his peculiar taste of design; which he never changed in any very considerable degree.

He evidently availed himself of the thoughts exhibited in the works of all the greater masters;

particularly in those of M. Angelo, Titian, Lionardo da Vinci, and Giorgione; but he cannot be said to have copied their inventions.

Whatever he borrowed from them, he has so admirably endowed with his own energetic spirit, so combined with his own peculiar feeling, that it but leaves a hint of its prototype, and becomes his own.

From Giorgione, he seems to have adopted that fine engaging vehicle for display of colour and chiaro-oscuro, presented by those fêtes champêtres, in painting which he so eminently excelled; and probably by them he was conducted to the scenes of rural life which he has depicted with such vivacity; from Lionardo da Vinci, we trace, unerringly we may say, his hunting scenes. By the works of M. Angelo, he framed his extraordinary groups of falling angels and mortals; and in measure moderated his line, as by the pictures of Titian, his colouring. But he did not transfer Venetian colouring to Flanders, as has been said. His system in that department of the art, is as different from theirs, as its effects.

Though he thus caught instruction from all these great artists, still he persevered in his own views of the art; and by that perseverance, has established his claim to rank among those men of original genius, who have extended its

boundaries, opened a new field for its exertions, and confirmed its claim to the admiration and respect of mankind.

The originality, and the peculiarity of invention in the style of Rubens, call upon us, when observing his works, to associate our minds with his; to abandon in measure the feelings elicited by the pictures of others, particularly the great Italian painters, and accompany him in his pursuit after those objects and effects among the varied productions of nature, by which he chose to illustrate his perceptions of the principles and the powers of the art.

If our desire be, to acquire knowledge from the labours of his pencil, this is the more necessary; but it is also in principle, the wisest way of securing to ourselves the greatest extent of the pleasure derivable from paintings. A narrow view of the boundaries of the art, or the range within which it may be employed, either in matter, or in manner, within the probabilities or possibilities of natural effects, is a great impediment to the full enjoyment of its power; and he who limits the exertions of the pencil to one peculiar line of direction, though it may be the highest, acts in opposition to the general interests of the art.

I cannot therefore coincide with those who lament, that Rubens had not cultivated his taste

to more perfect union with that of the ancients; or even of Raffaelle, or the solemn grandeur of Michael Angelo: and this I feel may be said, without abandoning the principle which dictates the preference due to them.

The mind of Rubens was evidently unprepared for such cultivation, by early associations; and his principles in the art were formed before he went to Italy. It appears therefore to me that it was more wise in him, to pursue a system of which he felt himself master, than be involved in a conflict of feeling the issue of which was uncertain, and which might, perhaps, have produced mediocrity only, in a pre-existing style. As it is, we have perfection in his own, and that powerfully original; extending its influence, like Michael Angelo's, to the boundaries of excess, and leaving no perceptible means for improvement in its peculiar character; at least none has yet been found.

No painter like Rubens, with so great an exactitude of imitation of natural objects, ever so ingeniously controuled their visible effects; or so brought them to act in uniformity with a settled system; that system being artificial to an extraordinary degree, and always apparent to a well informed observer. No one ever made nature so subservient to his own views upon so extensive a scale, with so illusive an effect. For

notwithstanding the extreme artifice of his style of imitation, it is the last thing which attracts our attention when examining his pictures; such is the power of that good sense which regulated his composition, and directed the freedom of his execution.

The invention manifested in the compositions of Rubens, seldom fails to conduct us to the real point of interest in his subjects whatever they may be; as far as line, and form, and expression are concerned. In these points, his pictures generally set criticism at defiance, and compel it to seek foundation for attack in the combinations of their light and dark, or the splendour of their colour. He does not always appear to have considered the extent of power in those principles of the art to destroy as well as to enforce expression; and it must be acknowledged that in the works of this wonderful man painted for the solemn purposes of the altar, those ornamental portions of the art are too frequently found impeding the sentiment of the composition, which they should have been employed to increase; and attracting the attention of the observer from the character of the subject, to which their influence ought to have confined it.

There are however many of his pictures of religious subjects to which such criticisms would but ill apply. Such are the Descent from the

Cross, and its side compartments, copies of which are in the room*, the St. Roch interceding with the Saviour for the removal of the plague, the Crucifixion, and many others; wherein touches of the deepest, and most powerful expression are portrayed with a freedom and ease, as astonishing as they are effective.

The main character of the style of composition of Rubens, is unrivalled splendour and magnificence of effect. An exuberant and vigorous power of invention, the fruitfulness and even prodigality of which were devoted to the production and support of those qualities, reigns triumphant throughout his works.

In those points even Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese, fall before him. To obtain such splendour and richness, his line in every part is large and flowing, even to exaggeration. Features and limbs are swoln and rendered coarse in their forms, draperies are extended, and even columns of marble are bent to gratify the excess of his love for that variety which constitutes the basis of the picturesque; and all are combined with the richest luxuriance of colour, and the most powerful effects of light and dark.

All this daring proceeding which in other, and weaker hands becomes disgusting, when conducted with his power, ingeniously applied, and with constant attention to the demands of

* In the Royal Academy.

beautiful composition; the whole being in unison, and evidently a free emanation from the original power of invention in his own mind; forming a style entire in its character, and bearing the stamp of genius as its passport: all this from him, we accept and enjoy, although it be at variance with better and purer taste; and far removed from a style of art better suited to many of the subjects upon which it was employed.

The extraordinary fecundity of his genius is visible in the immense range of the subjects upon which he employed his pencil; and there are but few objects in nature upon which it was not engaged. We see it in the rich flow of his line; the facility and wonderful power of his drawing; the variety, the life, the truth, and reality of his scenes and his imitations; which command our attention and admiration. The freedom and ease of his execution gives living energy to every limb of his figures, and bears the impress of a powerful hand, which could arrest, and give permanency, to the most energetic actions. He seems to have been as intimately acquainted with the appearances of flying figures and winged cherubs, as if they were continually fluttering about his painting-room. His works exhibit the most artful combinations of lines, and forms, not surpassed in intricacy and beauty by Michel Angelo himself: and whilst

he rivalled that great master in that respect, exhibiting a degree of knowledge equal to his of the structure of the human figure, though not so chastened an application of it, he far excelled him in the practice of the minor principles of the art; in ingenuity of touch, in arrangement of chiaro-oscuro, in richness and harmony of colouring, and in the general arrangement of a whole to produce a picturesque and an agreeable effect. In short, if Michel Angelo deserves the praise which is due to that high cultivation of the art which leads to its most important degree of elevation; and in his application of it, like the ancient Greeks, fixes our attention upon one point: Rubens merits the honour due to him who excels in all its other qualities; and sometimes he contends for the palm in that also.

Possessed of a full sense of his power and never varying his system, he carried the same scheme of art, the same mode of combination and execution, throughout the whole extended range of its practice. History, allegory, portraiture, animals, landscape, and still life, engaged his attention; and all bear the stamp of the same hand, guided by the same eye and the same mind. In so far, a certain degree of uniformity prevails in all of them, in colour, in form, and the texture of the surface; yet all are wrought with so much intelligence and beauty

of execution, that pleasure supersedes severity of criticism, and we applaud while we acknowledge the superiority of his power.

But refined or specific distinction of character appropriate to serious subjects was not his; and in his attempts to portray the Godhead, or even the mortal form of the Saviour, he makes manifest the original sin of his style. In subjects of an elevated and solemn character, the whole weight of the grossness of that style, too often chained him to earth; and the taste which dictated his choice of means for representing them, show the measure of the distance at which he must be placed below Raffaelle, or Michel Angelo; if justice be done to elevation or refinement of mind in the application of our art.

In comparing the labours of the great men I have just mentioned, we have the boundary which separates the art from its application, marked distinctly; and it is a distinction which greatly facilitates a right understanding of the qualities of painters. There is no denying, that Rubens infinitely surpassed Raffaelle and Michel Angelo (if not Titian) in the practice of the art; combining a greater extension of its principles, with far more perfect execution in all that relates to imitation, than either of them; and is therefore, speaking with reference to that power

only, by far the abler painter. But if, in our consideration of the qualities which form a great painter, we reflect upon the value of that taste which selects the most effective application of the power of the art of painting to exalted purposes, and so produces the deepest and most important impression upon the mind: then we must deprive him of that high station and give it to those, who, though they had less diversity of power in art, than he, have manifested greater wisdom, and a more elevated and purer taste, in its application.

We should do injustice to the artist, in withholding that honour from Rubens; but still greater injustice to the combination of the artist, and the man, did we not sanction its bestowal upon Raffaelle and Michel Angelo.

The honours deservedly bestowed upon this great painter far exceeded those awarded to any other; as they arose not only from admiration of his extraordinary power as an artist, but also from his general acquirements as a man.

To enumerate his works, or to bestow upon them the attention they merit, would be to employ your whole evening; such is their number, and such their power. You will find very minute and interesting descriptions of many of the most important with most admirable and useful comments upon them, in the journey

of Sir Joshua Reynolds through Flanders and Holland, published with his other writings; and I shall have occasion to refer to them again in other lectures.

Gaspar de Crayer, a contemporary of Rubens, produced pictures which approach so near to full rivalry with his, that they are not unfrequently mistaken for them: a species of praise completely indicative of their excellence, and precluding any necessity of further eulogium from me.

The school which the brilliant success of Rubens created, raised a number of ingenious artists, who, adopting his style, strove to rival the effects he produced.

But it is not given to every one to wield the club of Hercules! Native strength of mind and vigour of imagination are endowments required by those who attempt to render the system of action assumed by greater men, subservient to their own views; without them they but the more expose their weakness. So it proved with most of those artists above mentioned; whose works, though skilful, yet, according to the opinion given by Sir Joshua Reynolds, appear in comparison with his, dull and uninteresting.

But there are two we must select from the mass, whose display of art is of a different character; I mean Vandyke, and Jordaens.

Vandyke, with more delicacy of mind attempted to polish, while he employed the taste and style of his master. Jordaens on the contrary, with very great power, caricatured its stronger and grosser qualities in every respect; in choice of matter, in style of drawing, in execution, and in colour; and never escaping from its worst influence, rarely surrendered his thoughts to its best.

Vandyke, was more tasteful, and therefore more fortunate; and formed a style for himself, founded upon that of Rubens, which proved him to be by far, the worthiest scholar of his transcendent instructor. His historical pictures it is true, do not exhibit the amazing vigour of imagination which reigns throughout the works of Rubens, nor ever display great precision of character, or expression, but they are skilful in composition, and executed with a degree of beauty of touch, equalled in exactness by few. His style varied exceedingly. In his youth he was free and bold in all the qualities of fine painting, and seems to have wrought with great enthusiasm, as with prodigious strength of effect; and this style he preserved till he had been some time in England. Afterwards, he dropped the bravura of his taste, and became careful and delicate in every point. The great picture at Wilton, of the Earl of Pembroke's family, is an

example of the first, as are his fine portraits of Sir Robert and Lady Shirley, at Petworth, the head of Gevartius, and some others; but the numerous portraits by him in this country show a gradual diminution of that vigour, till we find some of them even tame. The knowledge of the forms of the head and features which they exhibit, and the careful precision with which they are marked, whilst breadth is maintained, render them more fit for careful and early study, than those of any other painter: and a student who has formed his taste and execution upon them, will be better qualified to employ the broader and grander manner of Titian, or Sir J. Reynolds.

Coeval with Vandyke, arose that most extraordinary luminary of the art in the Low Countries, Rembrandt Van Rhyn; whose fervid mind and vivid imagination, exceedingly aided in the manifestation of the extent of its power.

His view of the capabilities of the art was as original as that of Rubens, but was applied to objects and effects produced by nature of a kind totally different. The choice of Rubens was chiefly directed to the broad and brilliant effects of open air, and of a noon-day sun: Rembrandt loved to dwell on more confined effects of light — the illumination of a torch, or of a sunbeam, the twilight, or a flash of lightning, afforded him the opportunity of proving the accuracy of his

observation, the fidelity of his imitation, and the perfect command he enjoyed over the materials of the palette.

No one ever arranged composition with more complete adaptation for effecting the purpose he intended; or invented circumstances more appropriate to the expression of his subject than Rembrandt; not even Raffaelle.

They were not always, it is true, of an elevated character, nor unfrequently of a vulgar one: but they were the product of strong instinctive feeling, powerfully impressed with the knowledge of the natural character of man; and of that important elementary agent, light, in its visible effects upon natural objects. Such power for instance we find in his picture of the departure of the angel after the return of Tobias to his family, now in the Museum at Paris. In that picture one knows not whether to admire most, the sense and ingenuity of the invention in every desirable quality, or the incredible vigour, and effect of its execution. Such merits also are seen in his Return of the Prodigal Son; and his Death of the Virgin, in which the character of the high priest is grand almost to sublimity.

Exquisite touches of human feeling abound in his pictures, and interest us in spite of the low and vulgar characters by which they are manifested. Two admirable specimens of his pencil

adorn our National Gallery, to which I would direct your attention, as they exhibit his power in diverse styles, accordant each to its subject. The one as free and broad in its execution, as the other is minute and delicate; and both are beautifully effective. In them we find that perfect congruity throughout the arrangement of their peculiar effects, which proves them to be emanations of an original and vigorous mind. The whole is in unison in manner, matter, and execution, all are directed to one end, and that, an end unsought for by others, are impressed with the character of originality, and bear the stamp of genius.

But the greatest claim of Rembrandt, to high respect arises from his astonishing management of chiaro-oscuro. No matter what was his subject, high or low, interesting or trifling, he rendered it attractive by this powerful medium; conducting it with admirable sense and poetic feeling; and arranging it in beautiful forms.

It is unknown whence he derived his perceptions of the vast influence of this principle of the art, which he has exhibited to us more powerfully than any other man. He might perhaps have seen its prototype, in part, in the Notte of Coreggio now at Dresden, or rather of prints or drawings from it, the effect of which he has imi-

tated in several of his Nativities; but it had not been rendered by any of his countrymen before him; and certainly has never since been equalled by them. This exquisite power over chiaro-oscuro was accompanied by a most perfect sense of colouring. His eye appears to have been endowed with a capability for discrimination of tone, rivalled only by that of Giorgione, of Titian, or Coreggio.

The accuracy of his drawing, when he chose to imitate, was of the most extraordinary kind. Many of his academy figures, or figures drawn from nature, remain, and are models of that species of design, which seeks to be exact without tameness; they are touched with extreme spirit and truth of character, but with no indication of the slightest desire to give refinement of form. Yet the arrangement of form in the dresses of his figures, seems to have been an object of considerable attention with him, and is often exceedingly beautiful. In point of expression, his drawings are made more perfect with a few lines, than probably was ever done by any other artist; so powerful is the feeling of his mind displayed in them, and so clear an understanding did he possess of the means by which to express it.

His art, like that of Rubens, and Michael Angelo, touches, in its kind, the confines of extravagance; or rather, like theirs, sometimes

o'erleaps the boundary; and is rescued from discredit, only by the genius which prompted the bold exploit. Like their art also, it is a dangerous model to follow, unless congeniality of feeling be supported by an equivalent degree of intellect and cultivation in the artist who makes the attempt.

As I give to you, who are studying the art of painting, full credit for that ardent and enthusiastic feeling of delight in your profession, without which you may never hope for success; that unceasing activity of research after all that can afford you instruction; that perpetual enquiry into the power and the principles of the art, so necessary for attaining it; I cannot but suppose that you have earnestly contemplated the numerous and beautiful works of the masters of the Flemish and Dutch schools, which, by the gracious munificence of our royal patron*, were recently exhibited to our view.

The sight you have so lately enjoyed of those pictures, added to the multitudes of others of the same class which are continually to be seen in this metropolis, and afford you such opportunities of extending your knowledge of the character of the artists who produced them, renders it almost unnecessary that I should enlarge upon their merits.

* George IV. At the British Institution.

Neither the brilliancy, nor the clearness of the skilful compositions of Teniers, nor the character, and finish of Ostade, nor the perfection of expression in Jan Stein, can, I imagine, have escaped your observation. Nor have you failed, I presume, to endeavour to learn from the exquisitely beautiful management of colour in the works of De Hooghe, how wonderfully the power of the art extends even to the imitation of light itself: or with what perfection, precise imitation of the natural effects of objects, may be united with breadth, and delicacy, and softness, in the pictures of Metzu, or Terburg; with brilliancy in those of Potter; or with beauty in those of Wouvermans. You must have acquired a knowledge of the excellence of their landscape and marine painting, those faithful transcripts of nature in her common and sometimes in her grandest attire; their exquisite and minute imitation of animals, and of the charms of fruit and flowers; and all the various objects to which the art can be applied. All this I presume must be known to you; and it must be confessed, that as exhibitory of the power of the art of painting, that is, the mere power of imitating to the most perfect degree of precision, the productions of nature; and even of combining and arranging them, so as to produce the most powerful effect of contrast, and the most perfect appearance of

relief; in all, in fact, which the materials of the art are capable of effecting when employed in actual imitation, the palm of excellence must be given to the artists of the Low Countries, the Flemings and the Dutch. Pictures whose design is intended to convey sentiments or tell a tale, often excite great interest in description, though weakly executed; but those which have nothing of that kind to rely upon, yet exhibit the perfection of art, sink under description; their whole interest existing in the skill with which they are executed. We may learn much by regarding them, but nothing by talking of them!

The history of the art of painting in England presents no point of interest till the time of Charles I., if we except the productions of Holbein and Sir Antonio More, during the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth.

Had Charles enjoyed the throne in peace, he would probably have permanently established the art amongst us. His native taste led him to make a large and valuable collection of pictures, to invite Titian to this country, and employ such artists as Rubens and Vandyke. By the latter, most of the palaces of our nobility are enriched with beautiful works, produced during his lengthened residence here: two more particularly, Petworth House, and Warwick Castle.

But the career of the art, thus favourably be-

gun, was cut short in its progress; and the collection of fine examples made by the king, was dispersed by the tyranny of Puritanism, which took place at his death.

Unanimated by a spark of emulation of the beautiful paintings of Vandyke, or even those of Lely who succeeded him, our countrymen till the reign of George II. continued insensible to the beauties of fine art, and even degraded the weaker style of Kneller; till it was rescued, in a degree, from its wretched condition by Sir J. Thornhill, by Ramsay, and Hudson, and still more by Hogarth.

But it was reserved for the brilliant genius of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to remove, suddenly, the spell which hung over the art of painting in his country, and elevate it at once to a high state of perfection, rivalling the best in any age.

He was admirably supported by the talents of his able and venerable successor as president of the Royal Academy, Mr. West, and by those of Barry, Wilson, Gainsborough, Romney, Opie, and Fuseli; all men of great and original genius.*

* To these names of the departed great adorning the annals of British art, the irresistible hand of death has now, alas! added another.

Lawrence! the polished admirer and portrayer of beauty, the tasteful in poetic literature; a man fascinating in man-

What period of time, or what country, might not have been proud of that great moral dramatic painter, Hogarth! that inimitable inventor of a wide range of subjects from the most comic, to the most pathetic!

Born with the genius of an artist, though unfavourably educated for its developement, he forced his way through the difficulties that surrounded him; and in despite of a fearful want

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riers, and gifted indeed, with all the blandishments of brilliant genius.

Whilst his views of the art of painting were enlarging and the powers of his hand still refining, we are deprived of him!

How often have we beheld with admiration his pictures adorn our exhibition! each succeeding year manifesting to us, his unremitting industry and zeal, and the increasing power, with which he exercised his art; displaying, with with unequalled lustre, the beauty and the manliness which adorn our country!

How constantly, had the members of the Royal Academy, occasion to admire and applaud his persevering and unwearied attention to the duties of his exalted station!

Yet, while WE justly deplore his loss, we may rejoice for HIM; that having enjoyed a long and successful career, he was removed ere the disease which had assailed him had embittered his existence, or perhaps, diminished his mental power! Nay, we may even envy his lot, that he was withdrawn amidst the full lustre and dignity of those honours he so ardently sought, and so justly obtained; ere a leaf of the laurels which adorned his brow was changed, or the infirmities of the outward frame had, in the slightest degree, obscured the bright intelligence within!

of patronage, produced those works which so energetically display the weaknesses and failings, and sometimes the better qualities in the moral character of mankind; and will never fail to excite feelings sympathetic with his own, notwithstanding the changes that may ensue of manners, of dress, and of circumstances.

How skilfully he employed our art in reproving vice and lashing the follies of the day, and how excellent were his powers as an artist, you may learn in our National Gallery; from that keen, satirical, and poetical display of pride, extravagance, avarice, and folly, with their just punishment, which is depicted in his series of the Marriage a-la-mode.

We have too many testimonies of the ability of Sir Joshua Reynolds, as a man and as a painter which excite our admiration of him, to permit of any hesitation, in my mind at least, in placing him on a level with the most eminent of those who have practised the branch of the art which he more immediately professed; if not above them all!

It is by Titian, that the palm of merit must be disputed with him if by any one. And there is a vital power in the evident identity of character, and the calm dignity of his portraits, with their distinct and simple mode of relief, which weigh strongly in his favour. But, if Sir

J. Reynolds permitted his taste and his collected knowledge of the picturesque arrangements of backgrounds, and his extended luxuriancy of colouring and powerful and beautiful chiaro-oscuro, to divide interest with the portrait itself; we find these portions of the art combined with so much elegance and beauty, and executed with so much power, that we feel inclined to pardon the excess, for the sake of the wonderful ability which united the whole in so agreeable a display.

If, however, this excess of beauty throughout the whole, diminishing the influence of the principal object, were *generally* the character of the works of Sir J. Reynolds, then I fear that we must surrender the superiority to Titian.

But it is not so. That poetic, and almost sublime effusion of his pencil, the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the tragic muse, is a perfect instance of the reverse; and sufficient to rescue him from the imputation, were there not numberless others in which the extent of the higher principles of the art are manifested, and still the main object of portraiture preserved; and certainly when that is the case, the combination entitles him to the highest degree of esteem.

He added to portraiture a very important feature by adopting the peculiarities of actions of men, caught accidentally, or without observa-

tion; and leaving no appearance of their having been studied. By that means he obtained an infinite variety in his pictures: and as they have appropriate expression and accompaniments, not only are the features of their countenances, but their moral character and their station in life also, more completely developed and preserved to futurity. Thus he gave life to the biography of the talents and the beauty of his time; and elevated portraiture to the province of history.

He tells us, in those most valuable discourses which he has left us, and in which he has also discussed the principles of painting with so great authority, how he laboured to obtain excellence; and describes the earnest impulse of his mind in pursuit of all that could add strength to its native power, and advance his knowledge in his art; leaving us a perfect example for our imitation, in precept as in practice.

I would willingly recall to your remembrance more minutely the admirable qualities of that practice, the grace, the taste, which he never failed to impart to whatever he touched; time, however, will not permit me.

But whilst the allusion I have made to his works awakens your recollection of their beauties; let me advise you to be cautious, when you attempt to imitate them.

Men of great genius, are entitled to great

liberty! but the feeling which dictates the use of that privilege, nay, sometimes requires it for its perfect developement, being founded on knowledge, has always a reference to nature. When Shakspeare drew such monsters in human form as Iago and Lady Macbeth; carrying the influence of the evil passions which excited them, to acts beyond the bounds of probability; he shows us that he did not forget the source whence he drew: for he links them to human beings by delicate touches of natural character, which oblige us, though against our will, to acknowledge them as fellow-creatures.

In like manner, when M. Angelo, when Rubens, when Rembrandt, and Sir J. Reynolds, revelled in the pursuit of the best mode to convey the sentiments which actuated them, in the representation of character or of beauty in man or in animals, or even in the inanimate productions of nature; or to advance the beauty or the influence of art; and sometimes felt compelled to step beyond the bounds prescribed by exactness; even then, the intelligent and candid examiner will find proofs that it was not done without a reference to nature; or without that knowledge of her infinite varieties, which forms the only solid basis of the power of a painter.

This only sanctions the excess to our admiration, but not to our imitation; unless con-

genial knowledge be within us to guide our conduct.

I shall not at the present time pursue the history of the art in our country farther. It is gratifying to know that the abilities and taste of Sir J. Reynolds, supported by those of the able men whose names I have mentioned, and others who have succeeded them, have rescued it from the odium which was unjustly attached to it; and have entitled it to claim a share in the estimation and the praise due to the successful cultivators of the fine arts.

And now, gentlemen, what is the summary of the information I have endeavoured to afford you; and what the use to which it may be applied?

You have seen how the art of painting struggled through a long period of weakness and imperfection, ere it attained sufficient power to express, in a perfect manner, those perceptions of sentiment and of beauty, which more or less have accompanied the varied stages of the progress of man; and which writers and poets who could conceive them, have found comparatively little difficulty in conveying to others, through the medium of language.

At length, by the enthusiastic and persevering

labours of ingenious men, the means required for the perfect practice of the art were obtained, and its full powers made manifest. You have also seen the probable causes of its decay, at least in Italy and in France; at various periods, and by various means; but generally, if I am not mistaken in the view I have taken of it, by the misguided influence of its own excellence; when the artists, finding the labour of perfecting its different qualities completed to their hands, thought only of applying it in the most ornamental manner, and neglected the principles upon which was founded its claim to the respect that it had obtained.

If I have led you to a right understanding of this matter, you know that the great elevation of the art was obtained, only by the most vigorous exertions, the most emulative intelligence, and the most persevering industry, continued through the lapse of nearly three centuries by men of distinguished talents; and directed to one end, or nearly so, in each of the schools wherein the art has flourished.

Can we expect that it shall be maintained, where the like energy, the like exertions, the like elevated views are not upheld? Can we, without such exertions, reasonably hope to follow with success the career of those whose admirable talents have given to the art and its skilful

professors a station and a name honourable among men of intellect, and estimable among the cultivated and the tasteful? No! the hope so founded, would be vain! Philosophers in morals as in physics have told us, that like causes produce like effects throughout the whole of the operations of nature.

Skilful, and active exertion is therefore necessary through the whole course of a painter's life. It is difficult for him to gain a good name in his art, still more difficult to preserve it; and nothing will effect that purpose, so important to him, but maintaining a constant reference in his mind, to its true object and end.

I have freely commented upon the defects, as well as the merits, of some extraordinary artists; but I should regret exceedingly, if those remarks abated your zeal in the admiration of their real beauties, or weakened your enthusiasm in research after the excellent in art among their productions.

But zeal, is not blindness! nor enthusiasm, madness! Those vivid sensations of the mind, arising from powerful conceptions of the imagination, are consistent with sober judgment; and are never so useful, as when under its guidance. I can never conceive it right to maintain and nourish them at the expense of reason, when I know, that in powerful minds they are generated,

and supported by knowledge; and that it is only when the mind is fully conscious that its exaltation to zeal or to enthusiasm is founded in its perception of unadulterated truth in the object which excites to them, that they are confirmed, and enjoyed, and rendered useful. In weaker minds, when excited by unsound examples in art, or in doctrine; they are dangerous and mischievous; as their cause is evil, so is their effect; and the sooner they are eradicated, the better.

The main point then wherein you may hope to lay the firm foundation of a good name, and elevate the art in your country to the estimation of the world, is by cultivating your minds, whilst you employ your hands; that you may not be led to zealous or enthusiastic admiration in the cause of error. Exert your whole power in the discovery of the most important point for your attention in every class of art; or in the subject, or object, in the delineation of which you are engaged.

All the productions of nature, from the highest to the lowest, have intrinsic character; and so have all the scenes and combinations in which they are presented to our view, or may be conceived by our imaginations. When you have attained the knowledge of that character in whatever you are imitating, preserve it, never lose sight of it, but apply the whole means of

the art in your possession to its developement; rendering it as attractive as you can, by the addition of all the power of beauty, of grace, and of taste, with which your minds may be endowed: but never permitting those adornments, which should give strength to character and to sentiment, to supersede them. It is only when this well regulated union is obtained, that the art of painting reaches its acme of perfection; becoming attractive by its beauty, whilst it impresses by its truth.

LECTURE V.

ON INVENTION IN PAINTING.

1828.

LECTURE V.

ON INVENTION.

GENTLEMEN,

WHILST I address you on the principles and the practice of the art of painting, I entreat of you always to recollect, that my desire is to direct your attention to the effects produced by their combination when employed upon the more important branches of Historical Art, in subjects selected from sacred or profane history, or from poetry; those in fact, wherein the most active and extensive exertion of the inventive faculty of the mind is required; and wherein the powers of the art find the most ample means for their developement: and whenever I allude to any other portion of the practice of the art, I shall mention it specifically.

There is a vast advantage arising from thus directing our minds to the consideration of the most perfect efforts of the art, and the most proper objects on which to employ it. For if we accustom ourselves to familiarity with the highest and most extended employment of its principles in works of the most important class, it will

give us greater power over all the others to which we may direct our attention.

I shall treat of each of the principles of painting in its turn; but there is an active agent in the mind of man of the greatest importance to the painter, which demands a previous consideration; since without it, the acquirement of the knowledge of those principles and of the power they impart, would be vain: I mean, INVENTION.

It becomes proper therefore, that I should first direct your attention to the use which painting requires of that noble faculty of our minds; that power of recreating images once impressed upon our memories by our sense of vision, and of combining them in novel forms to illustrate the purposes we may have in view.

It is Invention, which more immediately gives importance to the art of painting when employed as by the greater masters: by Signorelli, by M. Angelo, by Raffaelle, by L. Da Vinci, by Rubens, by Titian, by Coreggio, by Julio Romano, by Rembrandt, and others; and it is because that art, throughout the whole course of its practice, requires the exercise and the governance of that stamp of Genius; that quality, which, more than any other, elevates man above the brute; which enables him, intellectually, to range through the visible creation, and by selecting and combining, create new sources of enjoy-

ment for himself; it is, I say, the extension of the influence of this great and glorious mental quality from the commencement to the end of the practice of painting, which justly places that art in the elevated station assigned to it, among those entitled liberal.

That compound of memory, of imagination, and of judgment, which we term invention; or that exercise of the mind which is engaged in finding out the means requisite for the fulfilment of any given purpose, is indeed applicable to the sciences, as to the arts; though not in equal degrees. The philosopher, the chemist, and the mechanic, as well as the poet and the painter, require its influence in the prosecution of their studies, and for the attainment of the objects of their research. But if there be one employment of the mind to which it may with more propriety be specifically attached, than to any other; one, wherein the means employed furnish less suggestion to the imagination for the furtherance of its end, it is painting. It is utterly impossible for a painter to proceed one step in the execution of the design it presents to his fancy, without its continued assistance; notwithstanding the advance of knowledge in the practice of the art. It directs his lines, it commixes his colours, it controls his arrangements of them; and in short, having provided him with the

means of proceeding, it continues to be his guide throughout the whole of his labour, and his main support. Such indeed is the subtlety of the art of painting, and such the power of invention, which the perfect union of its principles and the perfect application of them demands; that to this hour, the desire to see that union effected, remains ungratified.

In this respect painting differs essentially from its most powerful rival poetry; which finds in language, the common medium of intercourse between men, a ready agent, formed to meet, nay prompting its purposes; whilst as I have said, painting had, and every painter still has, to invent its means of address to the mind; as well as to provide, like the poet, the subject matter of it.

Mr. Fuseli, has said, in language as intelligent, as the idea it conveys is just, that "invention must not be confounded with creation! Our ideas," he adds, "are the offspring of our senses. We can no more invent the form of a being we have not seen, without reference to one we know, than we can create a new sense!"

In accordance with this just axiom, thus authoritatively delivered by one of the most imaginative of artists, we must consider man as a combiner, not a creator! That he can produce new images, only by the union in the whole, or in

part, of those which have already been impressed upon his fancy; and consequently, *he*, will be the greatest inventor, who, from active observation, has collected and retained in his memory the greatest quantity of natural imagery, and can render it again with facility in new and striking combinations —

"Giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

Though it may not be within the range of the power of man, to create for himself an imaginative capacity, a capacity distinct from that reasoning power which weighs and judges, ere it determines; yet, where the gift has fallen, it may be improved and strengthened by cultivation. And it is a privilege he enjoys whose memory is cherished by study, though he be not endowed with great vivacity of imagination, that he may create a source of invention peculiar to himself by storing his mind with natural knowledge; from which he may select fit matter for the purposes of design.

Herein perhaps, as much as in any other point, consists the difference, between a man of genius and a man of talent.

The imaginative mind, more readily calls those images it possesses to recollection, and more rapidly combines them in varied and novel shapes, within their still limited range, than he

of less vivid intellect. But though slower in these mental operations, the mind more cultivated, though less vivacious, having a larger domain for the indulgence of fancy, rich in possessions of a more varied nature for the purposes of illustration, will often, in the race for excellence, like the tortoise in the fable, make good its way to the goal of fame before its more active opponent; and of this, in the practice of painting, Ludovico Caracci and Domenichino, are very remarkable instances.

It is scarcely possible to consider the quality and the object of invention, as employed by the painter, without reference to its influence in poetry. There is an unity of object in the minds of the poet and the painter, which gives a near degree of affinity to the arts they profess. When employed upon the illustration of history or the productions of fancy, they differ only in their varied means. One spirit actuates them, one power directs them to the same end; their course only is different, as are the agents through whose means they act upon the different organs of our senses, the eye, and the ear.

The greatest, and most important effort required of invention in either of those arts, is the selection of that which best relates, adorns, and elevates, the subject chosen: or the separation of that which is essential, which gives vitality to it, from

the ordinary matter accompanying all mundane things.

Under what regulation the painter or the poet may select from among those visions of his imagination which are calculated to elevate, or to give to his subject the air of ideal character, or of refinement demanded by his fancy, remains a matter of taste; but one thing is clear, the basis of his means for the fulfilment of his desire, must be sought for on earth, and he must elevate the matter as he may; with constant reference to nature. A character understood by human beings must be maintained in the vision; and however small the portion, it will be the leading principle in the mind of the reader of the poem, or the observer of the picture.

Though both the poet and the painter are confined in their compositions to this principle of reference to nature, the poet is infinitely the most unrestrained of the two. The instrument he employs, and the organ he addresses, require far less of materiality, than is demanded of the painter; and numberless are the instances in which the privilege has been successfully indulged. But perhaps the extreme of all examples of the poet's freedom from great restraint in this respect, is to be found in Milton; and the judicious use he has frequently made of this

legitimate power, added to the importance of his subject, renders him the most sublime of all poets.

His portentous description of the figure of Death, is a powerful instance of his skill in employing this poetic privilege; for whilst, sufficiently for his purpose, it impresses the reader with the idea of the existence of a sentient being, yet it leaves him at an utter loss for a definite form attached to it; and the image becomes the more terrific in the imagination of the reader.

Yet even in this unreal image, this great poet connects the vision of his fancy with his knowledge of material form by minute descriptive touches; and by those alone are we first excited to partake of the feeling he would inspire: whilst the obscurity in which he has enveloped the rest of the figure increases its power on the mind. Having given by such means a natural basis for the thought he would illustrate, he then with security leaves the rest to the imagination of his reader.

Herein he has a vast advantage over the painter, who cannot so treat the observer of his picture; but must employ the agency of other natural objects, which may obscure, or give the monstrous deformity, so powerfully alluded to, but wisely left unrealised by the poet.

Let us for a while, therefore, examine this powerful piece of imagery, accepted from the poet; it may enable us the better to estimate the just province for the exercise of invention by the painter, and the boundary which prescribes its limits in the practice of his art.

Milton, has conducted Satan to the gates of his "dark opprobrious den of shame;" before those gates, "impaled with circling fire yet unconsumed," are seated Sin, and Death. His description of Sin, presents a combination of human female beauty with other natural and known forms; but of a loathsome character, and such as are productive of evil. And this combination, allegorical of the allurements of Sin, and the miseries it inflicts, we find no difficulty in accepting. Of Death, the poet thus commences his description; —

> "The other shape,
> If shape it might be called, that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
> Or substance might be called, that shadow seemed;
> For each seemed either."——

This vague, and paradoxical language, leaves us utterly at a loss for any ground whereon to found a conception of the nature, or the powers of the visionary being he would describe; and were the rest of its imagery of the same class, we should leave it unregarded. But he now

adds that, which identifies it with our natural knowledge, and at once elicits in our minds sentiments congenial with his own.

> Black it stood as Night, ——
> And shook a dreadful dart; what seemed his head,
> The likeness of a kingly crown had on. ——
> Satan was now at hand, and from his seat,
> The monster moving onwards, came as fast
> With horrid strides; Hell trembled as he strode.

The touches of natural character which now accompany this terrific imagery, those slight degrees of union with our knowledge of a being endowed with intellect and with power, at once lead us to accept the whole without further and vain consideration. Our imagination kindles with the poet's enthusiasm, and thus excited, we continue to act with him through the remainder of his glowing description; which vague and visionary, is aided in like manner, by touches drawn from nature.

In the continuation of this description, and of the threatened combat between these two dread powers, Satan and Death; Milton employs another of those valuable privileges which attach to poetry, viz., change of shape and of expression. Such ideas it can completely excite in the mind of the reader, but they are out of the reach of the painter, whose forms are fixed.

So spake the grisly Terror; and in shape
So speaking and so threat'ning, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform.

Thus wide is the range within which the imagination and the invention of the poet may be indulged; but all efforts to transfer such imagery to canvass, and impart to it the dread power of the impression made upon our minds by this poetic effusion, have been found inefficient. That portion of the vision, which may be said to be realised by the poet, may be, and indeed has been, in our own time and country equalled, and even surpassed in impressive power; but as for that which is visionary, and which lends so much influence to the other, the painter must fail. He can but disguise the figure by other natural forms; draperies must clothe it, or clouds or vapours encompass it; which, as they cannot be divested of their own native power on the mind, will confuse the vision; and disturb that singleness of thought, to which poetry, unincumbered by such necessities, gives full effect: and which is so necessary for the fulfilment of the purposes of poetic invention.

This brilliant example of the poet's art, somewhat trespassing on the extreme boundary even of his privileges, and which none other than Milton might safely employ, is well calculated to show the difference which exists in the prac-

tice of the arts of poetry and of painting, as far as relates to the use of invention. The spirit of that power, which collects and selects, which separates and combines materials suited to the purposes of either art; is alike operative for the cultivation of each, throughout the whole visible region of nature, or the whole of the character and conduct of man.

The poet however, as it appears, has the advantage of pressing into his service invisible agencies, which is denied to the painter; his agencies must be the tangible, the evident productions of matter; and on these alone, and the different degrees of illumination and imitation under which he may choose to present them, must he rest for support.

Before I quit this subject I will mention another of the privileges of poetry in great measure denied to painting; viz., condensation of matter; embracing within a few lines many events, and great extent of time. There is a remarkable example of it given by the noble author of Childe Harold, when, in the third canto of that work, he makes the battle of Waterloo his theme, with the fierce destruction of human life that accompanied it.

> Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
> Last eve in beauty's circle proudly gay,
> The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,

The morn the marshalling in arms, — the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse, — friend, foe, — in one red burial blent!

The touches of expression contained in this beautiful and powerful verse are little more than hints, and not descriptions of the events preceding and attending the great and decisive battle to which it relates; they are sufficient for the poet's purpose, and supply thoughts which convey the reader through the whole course of those events so rapidly, that we may almost say it is effected at once. Such a privilege of combination painting enjoys but in a limited degree, as I will shortly show; whilst the poet may combine all seasons and all time. Indeed there is no idea, within the region of sense, to the explication of which the power of language does not extend, and the expression of it requires only suitable imagination in the mind of the poet. The painter, may conceive the same thoughts in vain! Elevated and noble and brilliant ideas may enter his mind, he may think like a poet, but he must choose from amongst the varied images which are excited within him like a painter, in conformity with the limits of his own art, or he will labour in vain.

It becomes therefore of exceedingly great moment to a painter, that he know how to choose those subjects for the display of his art, whose whole purport may be effected by the exercise of its legitimate powers; by figures, which can be circumscribed by form and perfected by colour; the sentiments appertaining to which are capable of being conveyed by action and expression, and made defineable by circumstance. Another consideration should also weigh with the painter. He ought not only to select such subjects as may receive their full and complete illustration by keeping within the prescribed rule I have mentioned; but also, to prefer those, by which he may reasonably expect to produce a feeling responsive with his own in the mind of the observer.

Wisdom in selection, with truth of imitation, is the basis of all that is good in art; yet it is necessary to guard that simple axiom from being misunderstood.

Let no one suppose, that, by that expression, I mean exact and precise imitation, or that I intend to limit the power of the art, or the imagination of the artist, to that which is immediately before our eyes; except in whatever relates to character. But should an artist possessed of the most brilliant imagination, indulge it in the most ample range of imagery, and

revel in the delight which the most vivid ideal scenes of pleasure or of terror will afford him; for all employment of the imagination is productive of delight to the inventor; to what purpose will it be, if in his endeavours to represent these sports of his fancy on canvass, he fail to convey sympathetic emotion to the minds of others? And, if he draw not the illustration of his chosen subject, from the representation of things with which they are acquainted, if he employ ill-founded allegory, or extravagant combinations of form and effects; how shall he do other than fail! Can any reasonable man be excited to pleasure by that which he does not comprehend! or find in his own mind an image responsive to that presented to him, if he know not its source! The artist who thus indulges his taste and employs his pencil in wild fantasies, emboldened by the vigour of his imagination, and contemning less adventurous examples; may be so far deluded, as to fancy that the fire with which he is excited to warmth may spread its glowing influence to others, and excite like zeal in them.

But the main object of painting renders it a popular art; or an art which ought to be addressed to the rational, the spiritual, and tasteful, but not the visionary portion of mankind. Though it be the product of genius; of that

power, which views with added energy, the ordinary conceptions of men, and lends the glow of grandeur, of grace, of beauty and of expression, to things and circumstances; yet its principal, its main dependance is upon common sense: and however we may flatter ourselves that by a greater indulgence of imagination, a more extreme refinement of our forms, or, by more powerfully contrasting, or more softly uniting our colours, we should establish our claim to greater influence over the minds of others; if that exercise of imagination, that refinement of form, or those contrasts or unions of colour, be not restrained within acknowledged boundaries, the attempt will be vain; as numberless examples have shown to us.

The best occupation of the painter is in delighting and interesting and elevating the mind, and not in bewildering it; and therefore, no artist who creates monsters, or engages his talents in the display of subjects obscure or mystic, has a right to be offended if the world does not receive them with approbation. Though *he* may term the creations of his fancy improvements upon the works of nature, or see within the visions of his imagination latent hints of high-formed intelligence, of moral instruction, or of pious fervour; his opinions and feelings are, in this case, no authority to guide the judgments of

others; to them the figures may be still monstrous, and the images abstruse or absurd! Nor is there much strength exhibited in such proceeding. "He," says Dr. Johnson, "who forsakes the probable, may always find the marvellous." And Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, that those inventions which either disdain or shrink from reason, are more like the dreams of a distempered brain, than the exalted enthusiasm of true genius.*

If, however, the subject chosen be of a supernatural kind, employing the instrumentality of imaginary but acknowledged agents; then indeed, the fancy more than the judgment is appealed to; and in determining its value, each man will be guided by his own power of imagination, and his peculiar taste dependent upon it.

But kindred eccentricities are rare; and consequently, the eccentric find few adorers. Each man who lies under such baneful influence, and so enters upon an unfrequented path to the temple of fame, must expect to find his course rough and interrupted, with few associates to cheer him on the way; and ought to esteem himself fortunate, if he be not entirely overcome by the difficulties he will have to encounter.

Such inventions then are the superflux of the art of painting, and its bane.

* Discourse 7th.

The truly great and good in art endures revisal, invites it indeed, grows in influence over us, as we advance in knowledge; continually presents new delight to the observer, and increases in our estimation as acquaintance with it the more informs us of its value. As with truth in morals, we feel its influence at first; but as our perception of its strength increases we attach ourselves to it with redoubled ardour, it fixes itself on our memories more powerfully, and we enjoy the recollection of it with the greater degree of zest.

The reverse happens with works originating in extravagance or conceit! A picture fraught with these qualities may at first sight attract by its novelty, or influence by its vigour; but the fictitious qualities which charm us on a first inspection, speedily lose their influence as we further contemplate the work and perceive their fallacy: and as these defects act upon our minds they produce dissatisfaction, till it end in contempt or disgust.

"Shakespeare," says Blair, "pleases us most, not by his grotesque thoughts, and mixtures of tragedy and comedy; not by his strained and affected witticisms; but by his animated and masterly representations of characters, the liveliness and truth of his descriptions, the force of his sentiments, and his possessing, beyond

all writers, the natural language of passion." "Beauties," he adds, "which true criticism no less teaches us to place in the highest rank, than nature teaches us to feel."

When we have thus excluded all thought of that matter to which the invention of the painter ought not to be directed; we shall find, that there remains a sufficient mass of important materials within his reach, proper for the exercise of his art; and presenting sufficient attractions to excite his enthusiasm; and sufficient difficulty, to require his utmost ardour, and engage all the vigour of his intellect.

But, since the region within which the invention of the painter can most effectively employ and direct his art, has a boundary so specific, confined to those thoughts and objects which will bear a positive and definite display, or obtain perfect illustration by the materials his art employs; it the more forcibly leads him to consider the necessity of extending the sphere of his natural knowledge; of his becoming intimately acquainted with all the stores of imagery it best can furnish him.

No ingenuity can parry this necessity, or create a substitute for it. No exercise of genius, however brilliant, can abide the test of enquiry into its truth if not founded on this knowledge, which alone provides proper means for the exer-

tions of genius. It is from the treasures of memory that the imagination is supplied with materials for invention; and it is, as I have said, only by reasoning from that which we know, and combining ideas familiar to us, and derived from natural causes, that we can create new and interesting scenes. The season of life when we can most effectively prepare for this, is youth. Then, the varieties and the beauties of nature charm by their novelty, and the pleasure which that novelty excites, aids in fixing the images of the objects which gratify us in our memories, in store for future application.

All those objects or scenes, all those circumstances or combinations of nature which impress ideas of beauty, of grace, of tenderness, of sublimity, or of terror, should be familiar to the painter. Whatever can impart to his mind the knowledge of the forms or the combinations of colours which excite such sensations as are the result of those ideas, should constantly be objects of his research; since such result is the solid foundation of the best exercise of his art. All with which moral philosophy or poetry can inspire him; all which can agitate, or calm the mind, must be objects of reflection and emulation to him; and there is no place or society, which will not supply food for his imagination and invention, if he be earnestly intent upon qua-

lifying himself to reap the fame due to merit in his art.

Above all, he must be intent upon obtaining the knowledge of man, both in his mental and corporeal capacities, in all his varied stages, under all possible circumstances, and through all his diversified characters. He must observe his actions and the expression of his features in his unguarded moments, when indulging the better feelings of his nature, or when under the influence of the ruder passions: and tracing the sympathetic connection between his internal feelings and their external tokens, learn to pourtray the appropriate form which distinguishes each character; which displays to view the varied influence of virtue, or of vice; of sentiment, or of folly; or presents us with the images of childhood, youth, or age; of health and sickness, beauty or deformity.

The spirit which Plutarch ascribes to Philopœmen, the Grecian general, has been quoted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in illustration of this active quality of enthusiasm in a painter; and we may gather from his recommendation of such a model, whence he himself drew the graces and the charms of form, of colour, and of combination, which render his works so replete with thought, and so enriched by just and beautiful expressions of character.

This acquaintance with the works of nature, should be accompanied by a knowledge of the productions of art; as the shortest mode of obtaining a perception of its capacities, information of its means, and of overcoming the difficulties of its practice.

If thus stored with knowledge, the basis of invention, the able painter may apply it in modes of almost infinite variety. It is true, that, to afford pleasure to the eye, and thence, to the mind, has been the most extensive employment of the art of painting; but there is another point of higher import within its reach, and that is, engaging the better feelings of our nature, and so supplying moral instruction. This it attains by adopting such subjects, and employing such imagery as shall excite amiable, and exalted sentiments; and engage our mental faculties in the contemplation of acts of affection, of virtue, and of heroism.*

It is evidently, therefore, the most valuable exercise of the art which employs it on such subjects as call forth intellectual power, and excite useful and elevated reflections; and such

* The imitations of drawings by Flaxman recently published are admirable and refined examples of this high tone of employment for the art of design; combining the pure feeling and well-directed simplicity of the earlier masters, with the fulness and intensity of expression of M. Angelo.

was the main end proposed when painting was employed, as at its revival in Italy, to assist in the service of the altar.

The professed object of the Roman church in the use of pictures was to awaken the imagination of the devotee, to fix his attention, to exalt and to concentrate his ideas of the great source of his present religious comforts and his hopes of future happiness. And were it possible to limit their influence to those points, it is not improbable, that they might have been retained in our churches when zeal for reform led to the establishment of Protestantism. Hence, the exclusion of pictures from the churches of the reformers, becomes an argument in proof of the power of painting over the mind. They felt it potent; and that its influence, aided as it had been by priestcraft, rested not with the mere excitation to devotional feeling, but too often spread onwards, till the picture, or the ornamented shrine itself, became the point of attraction; and the reverence due to the Divine Being, the only proper object for adoration, was absorbed by the saint or the Madonna represented.

Paintings possessing such important influence on the mind are of two classes. The one being of subjects drawn from sacred sources, or the most important events of history or of poetry;

requiring the most exalted taste and skill, the grandest style of form and composition, and the most impressive tones of colouring; that it may the more deeply impart the peculiar sentiments intended to be conveyed by it, with a character, and in a manner correspondent to the dignity of the matter on which it is engaged. In subjects of this nature, precise imitation is not required; nay, would be out of place. To excite the mind to act for itself, and undisturbedly promote the full effect of the intended purpose, must be the object of the painter: to cause the image, not to occupy the mind for itself, but act as the inspirer and interpreter of the sentiment which belongs to the subject. Of this class of subject, and of this style of treatment are the labours of Michael Angelo in the Sistine chapel, and of Raffaelle in the Vatican, and in the Cartoons; the works of Titian in his serious historical subjects, of Bartolomeo, of Masaccio, of Giotto, and many others of the old Italian masters; and of Lionardo da Vinci, although, perhaps, his mode of treatment is more laboured than is necessary or grand. We may add to them many beautiful productions of our own country, and particularly from the skilful labours of West, the poetic pencil of Fuseli, and the playful fancy of Romney.

The other class of moral subjects, or of those

which influence the mind, employs the events and the imagery of common life; exciting emotions, at once, amiable and agreeable, by the display of parental or social affection and of pure and innocent enjoyment; or of amusing scenes, which engage the mental faculties, and are not employed to stimulate the sensual inclinations of men.

To obtain its end, this class of art often adopts the agency of ridicule, satire, the more direct exposition of the follies of fashion, the indulgencies of vice, or the more agreeable display of virtuous conduct. Such an application of the art, uniting the qualities of the poet and the painter, was more peculiarly that of our own Hogarth. The nature of the subjects he treated often compelled him to employ materials low in character; yet in humour and in pathos, they are rendered admirable by their application to moral purposes.

In the illustration of subjects, drawn from historical facts, the invention of the painter ought not to be confined to the conception of the matter they present, precisely in the order in which the historian is bound to relate them. The exactness of the historian, and his minute attention to order in the arrangement of facts; his care to avoid anachronism, to give to each period of time the event which distinctly marked

it, may in a great degree be dispensed with by the painter who treats the same subject; and who has only one moment of time for the display of all its interest.

He is therefore at liberty, or rather it is required of him, to bring together all those circumstances belonging to his subject, which he conceives best calculated to render it most interesting. Probability and possibility are his only controllers; and there is no other reasonable bound to the exertions of his invention, except, the natural limits of his art. It is the same in the delineation of forms, or the arrangement and employment of colours; in each of them, the laws of nature which relate to character as allied to the subject, to harmony of colour, and to unity of feeling, are, as I have said, the only controllers of the painter.

The instances are numerous wherein this privilege has been employed by artists. Thus Raffaelle, in the Heliodorus, has made the high priest officiating at the altar whilst the punishment of the plunderer of the temple is executed by the ministers of divine vengeance; establishing by this, the identity and sacredness of the place. Thus, also, in the Attila, though I think not so judiciously, he has combined the vision of St. Peter and St. Paul to the ravager, forbidding his farther approach to Rome, with his interview with the Pope which effected that object;

though they were events of different moments.* I need scarcely call to your recollection the admirable application of this privilege, by Mr. West in his picture of the death of General Wolfe; by which he has added so largely to the interest of the subject.† Upon the same principle, Mr. Copley conducted the picture of the death of the Earl of Chatham.

Neither of those compositions are truly consonant with the actual facts they represent: but both combine circumstances, which, not being too far removed from possible truth, tend to enforce the interest of the subjects. As this indulgence, however, is granted to the artist, for the purpose only of enabling him to concentrate and increase the power of expression, and give all the interest of a tale at once; we have a right to expect him to be cautious in the use of it, and confine it within proper bounds; or to employ it only as far as is absolutely necessary, and always

* Raffaelle however must be absolved from this anachronism; for there exists a design of his for this subject, in which the Pope is seen *coming* in the distance. But when Leo X. became possessed of the papal sovereignty, he evidently required of the painter to place him in the foreground of the picture, as Julius II., his predecessor, had done in the Heliodorus.

† There is a print from a picture by Mr. Pine, where the fact is represented as it took place. The General died when accompanied only by his surgeon and his orderly grenadier.

with an entire preservation of unity, in character, and effect.

There are many other subjects, for the illustration of which the ready inventions of ingenious men have applied the power of the art of painting; and though they do not come specifically under either of those classes I have mentioned, yet they call for powerful perceptions of truth and beauty of imitation. Such are portraits, landscapes, sea pieces; combinations of objects formed to show the capability of art, and afford pleasure to the eye, and, not unfrequently, sentiment to the mind. For these purposes, selections of natural scenery and natural effects afford an infinite variety, and demand varied treatment.

The object of invention when employed in painting as relative to the art itself, is, to render the subject clear and intelligible, whatever may be its nature; to discover the means by which a full impression of its character may be presented to the eye, adorned and elevated in the highest degree compatible with that character.

The choice of his subject, is the first important point for the attention of the painter: that it be distinct in its nature; that all the sentiments which belong to it may be expressed by natural circumstances, or imaginary combina-

tions of natural objects; that it be capable in itself of exciting the mind to emotion, to some one of the many feelings to which the human being is liable; and the nobler, and the more pure the better. That it be of a kind, the whole force of which is wrought up in one single moment of time; or may be so composed of appropriate circumstances, as to produce that effect; and, if it be possible, that it may be made to possess connecting links between the moment of action represented, and those events which led to, or may succeed it.

This purely mental operation is in its principle alike necessary for the poet as the painter; but there are other claims for invention in the latter derived exclusively from the necessities of his own art. These consist in the selection of fit means for the explanation of the subject by that art; the best mode of arranging the materials chosen to produce the effect he desires, in lines and in colours; and in discovering the best mode of employing the materials of the palette, for the purposes of imitation.

In all these points, singly, and combinedly, the exercise of invention should have one determinate object in view.

One sentiment only can occupy the mind at once; and though the emotions of that subtle essence of our existence are rapid in their com-

binations, yet it is most gratified when feeling can be combined with simplicity. Hence those compositions will have most power over it, which direct its attention to one point and fix it there. Whenever there is a combination of various objects, each occupying the mind for itself; the impression of the whole, becomes vague, and comparatively uninteresting.

From the general character of the principal pictures of the ancient Greeks, as they have been described to us, this principle appears to have been well known to them, and practised by them. It is undoubtedly one great cause of the deep impressions which single figures in sculpture make upon us.

We have examples of the effect of each of these species of pictures, in the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. I allude to the pictures, of Adam receiving life from his almighty Creator, and of Adam and Eve at the foot of the tree of knowledge. In the first, the one idea inculcated of animation imparted by the Divine presence, remains undisturbed; or leads only to that which adds importance to it. It is one, from which our minds turn only to contemplate the great Source of light and life, with all his powerful attributes, and the entire dependence of man upon his will; which reconducts us to the important blessing bestowed. In the

other picture, how many are the considerations to which it leads by the compound nature of the materials composing the double action which it represents! it is indeed a combination of two subjects, which occurred at different periods, viz., the introduction of sin into the world by our first parents, and its first evil consequence; and though there be an evident moral union between them, yet, I think it cannot be denied, that this picture exhibits the disadvantage of employing too much of matter at once. The mind becomes disturbed with the varying thoughts which arise on observing it; till weariness and confusion, rather than enjoyment is excited: and probably such a combination would not have been resorted to by M. Angelo, had not the space he had to fill and the explanation of his subject, conjoined to compel his adopting it.

The only works which I can call to mind, in which the introduction of two subjects at once, adds force to the whole, are the Transfiguration, and the Release of St. Peter from Prison, by Raffaelle.

The acts represented in the former were simultaneous, and exhibit at one moment, the super-human character of the Redeemer, and his relation to mankind; his converse with heaven, and his benevolence to man: and thus the union

of the two actions, seems to have been requisite for the full explanation of that mystical subject; and justifies the bold but judicious invention of the painter.

In the Release of St. Peter by the angel, the adoption of two points of time in the action of the subject, though certainly against the strict rules of the art, yet carries its apology in its necessity; for, the developement of the cause why Almighty power descends to unloose the bonds of the imprisoned apostle, could not be made fully to appear, but by the daring invention which brings him conducted by the angel to the open door of the prison. This however it must be acknowledged is by far the least defensible of the two; since the imagination might have sufficiently supplied the inference, had the painter thought proper to trust to the first, or central part alone.

In well-ordered pictures the same spirit of union directs the invention of the painter in the application of the principles of his art, as in his selection: in his choice of composition, of tone, and of colour: in his mode of execution, and his arrangements of light and dark, in colours, or in shades; all ought to tend to one end, the support of the character and purport of the subject.

This important point in invention, *unity*, is

easily maintained, where, as in the Adam of M. Angelo, the composition consists of a few figures; but in subjects demanding a variety and number of figures for their more perfect illustration, it is preserved with difficulty: and yet to produce a good effect it is absolutely necessary that it should be preserved, or the work will be inefficient.

The cartoons* around you, are the best examples of it, in composition, which I can point out to you; those particularly of St. Paul preaching at Athens, the Death of Ananias, and the Healing of the Lame Man at Lystra, which you may at any time consider at your leisure. But their peculiar excellencies in point of invention, have been so admirably illustrated by Mr. Fuseli, and Mr. Opie, that I shall refer you for further information to their lectures; which are, or ought to be, in possession of every lover and student of the painter's art; and it has been a great point with me in the composition of my own, to render them an extension of the knowledge conveyed by theirs; or further illustrations of the points which they have touched upon; rather than repeating the same matter; as far at least, as the nature of my subject would admit.

* Copies of the Cartoons of Raffaelle made by Sir James Thornhill, and presented to the Royal Academy by the late Duke of Bedford.

The choice of the subject, then, will govern the choice of materials, and the mode of employing them; and this justifies the observation I have before made upon the importance of that choice.

But in this point, no man can with propriety be directed. Each will choose according to his native disposition, and act wisely in so doing. Our own school has an advantage arising from our independent mode of conduct in this matter, and from our practice; though that practice may, in some respects, be called licentious! It produces a vast variety of art amongst us, and calls for an extensive exercise of the inventive power.

It is not fair, it is not wise, to limit the efforts of artists to that rule, which Dryden has laid down for the exercise of invention in painting; "that it must always be done in conformity with the examples which have been set us by the ancients." Had such always been the governing principle in the practice of the art, we should not now have to rejoice in the works of many whom we deservedly esteem; whose labours at first met with the reprehension of critics, but are now treated with the respect they merit. Of this the works of Wilson, and Reynolds, are a sufficient proof.

It would be absurd in artists to abandon their

just privilege of selecting from among the works of nature those peculiarities, or those circumstances, the imitation of which they may feel congenial to their own apprehension, and the display of them, within the power of their art!

Every man of genius, however, who is actuated by that spirit of original taste, that spirit which leads, like the genius of Rembrandt, to the selection of effects for the exercise of his pencil, previously unobserved or unattempted by others, ought to recollect the danger of being led too far by the peculiarity of his feeling. He should remember, that the world are unprepared to accept his labours, their taste in art being founded upon works wrought for different purposes, and on a different application of its principles. Hence, he must expect to find opposition from the world at first, rather than support: not so much from any ungenerous feeling, or from a disposition anxious to decry; as from previous study of other adaptations of the principles of painting, and a want of understanding its extensive capabilities; which can be known only to the practical artist.

I shall not, I hope, be regarded as the advocate of a wanton and useless love of variety; much less, a contemner of those great and glorious productions of the painter's art which

the world has so long and so justly regarded as its master works, and therefore, fit guides for us. They are indeed, admirably suited for the fulfilment of their intended purposes; and it is in extension of the foundation on which those works have been formed, that I entertain the sentiments I have expressed. Those works are the product of a skilful observation of nature; and so consequently are the principles of art we deduce from them. What sufficient reason then can be assigned, why the art should not be applied in imitation of all the possible varieties of effect in nature, provided that imitation be conducted with like truth? If this be not justly founded, painters retain no power of extending the boundaries of their art, either in principle, or in practice; and the most valuable exercise of genius is denied to them.

Painting in its youth, guided by the simplicity and feelings of youth, directed its energies to the developement of simple truth, to explain, and to impress it; and rested satisfied with its effect. Invention was generally employed by the early painters, in its most natural, and direct course; and when they undertook to represent an historical fact, their minds were engaged in seeking the simplest mode of conveying the sentiment of their subject. Selecting such figures, giving them such actions, and combining them in such

a manner, as would pourtray most significantly, the circumstances of the tale, with reference to its consequences; exhibiting them with as good imitation of nature, as their degree of talent permitted. Such as I have shown to you was the art of Cimabue and of Giotto, and most of the early painters; and certainly this is the most direct, if not the most agreeable employment of painting: that, by which an observer is simply attracted to the contemplation of a subject, and finds it unfolded to his understanding. Subsequently, in the search after improvement, artists, unable to add much to the clearness with which their predecessors presented the fact they pourtrayed, endeavoured to improve the art; and to embellish their subjects by dignity and elevation of thought, and refinement of taste in composition and effect, and in beauty and grandeur of style. When that was obtained, the restless research of man after renown, the love of the fame due to original genius, inspired others with the desire of adding farther embellishment to the art, but resorting to undue means they destroyed it.

Though the power of invention has shone bright in the works of many great and renowned masters in the Italian and other schools of the art of painting, yet the noblest of all its efforts, and consequently the fittest for our present contemplation, arose from the genius of Michel

Angelo, as we see it displayed in the chapel of Sixtus in the Vatican. We find its perfection in the propriety and sublimity of the subject chosen; in the ingenuity the copiousness and unity of its plan, and the intense depth of thought and feeling it displays; as well as in the elevated style of its execution.

The energy with which Mr. Fuseli has treated the power of invention manifested in this wonful production, seems almost to preclude any farther attempt to illustrate it; and if I enter at some length into a description of the emotions of my own mind, upon seeing this important work, it is not that I aspire at any thing more than to prove to you, how consideration justifies the high conceptions of that superior artist and critic; and assist in fixing in your minds, those exalted ideas of the power of the art you profess, with which his lectures ought to inspire you. Led by his genius to a right apprehension of the general principle of the subject, it appears so justly organised, the parts so judiciously chosen for the clear illustration of that subject, that we cannot sufficiently wonder at its having been left unelucidated, to so late a period. Yet true it is, that Mr. Fuseli was the first who penetrated the mist in which it was involved; and perceiving the sublime intent of its great author, has given to the world a well-digested

idea of the unity which governs the whole of its extended compositions; and shown it to be one combined mass of separate subjects, operating to one end; in like manner, as the whole of the scenes of the Paradise Lost were composed and conducted by Milton.

In the adornment of this chapel, devoted to the especial adoration of the Almighty, by him who is regarded by thousands as his vicegerent upon earth, M. Angelo has displayed the system of the divine government of the world from its creation, with that also of the elements that surround and uphold it, to its final destruction: including the conduct and eternal fate of man, as deduced from the sacred records and understood by the Christian. In illustration of this grand and important subject, he has represented in a series of pictures painted on the platfond of the ceiling, The formation of the elements, and of the earth; The gift of animation to man; The acknowledgment of human dependence on his Divine goodness; The introduction of sin into the world at the tree of knowledge, and the consequent condemnation of man to suffering and sorrow; The preservation of the worship of God by the one only faithful, in the sacrifice of Noah; His consequent preservation from the deluge; and The relapse of man into sin, by the conduct

of Noah and his two sons. Hence, arose the necessity of a Redeemer and a Saviour to man; and hence the introduction on the vaultings below of the greater prophets who foretold the coming of that Saviour; together with those sibyls, who according to the legends of the Roman Church, alluded to the same important event; and to the future exaltation, or punishment of man. The triumph of David over Goliath, the execution of Haman, and the heroic act of Judith, represented in three of the angles of the vaulting, show immediate acts of the power of God; who by the weak, confounded the strong, and preserved the race of men from whom proceeded the Saviour*; whilst the elevation of the brazen serpent, represented in the fourth angle, conveys, according to our theologists, a type of the healing nature of his sufferings. The remaining subjects tend to the illustration of the virtues of humanity, and of that great point in our faith, the union of the Old with the New Testament;

* I have been told that the Roman church gives another interpretation to the subjects of the pictures in the angles, viz., as types of the performance of that promise made by God to man, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. That in the Judith, it is the woman (a type of the virgin), who effects that end. In the David her seed. That in the Esther we behold the elevation of the woman to honour; and in the Brazen Serpent our rescue from everlasting death by her Son.

till the whole is perfected in the tremendous picture of the Last Judgment.

But if we except that picture to which I have twice before alluded, the animation of Adam, and the admirable choice of subjects for the illustration of his main object, it is not in the series of pictures on the ceiling, that I would seek for the best illustration of the inventive faculty of M. Angelo, as a painter.

Let us descend to the vaultings below, and we shall find it there triumphant. In the composition of the Prophets and Sibyls, each accompanied by two genii, emblematic of the knowledge of past and future events*, his invention was chiefly employed to exhibit the soul within; to render visible the abstract qualities of the human mind, the sentiments, the feelings which actuate it; and it is by his having so effectively done this, that I feel he has added to art, what no other painter, before or since has effected in an equal degree.

* It does not appear that Mr. Fuseli was aware of the intention of M. Angelo in accompanying his prophets by these genii, since he says, when speaking of the Prophet Daniel, that "*he transcribes from a book upheld by a boy.*" Nor have I any authority on which to justify my conjecture, except the very appropriate actions given to these figures. One of them is always calm and behind; the other in action, as in the Isaiah, the Ezekiel, the Erythrean Sibyl, whose lamp he illumines, &c., &c.

In all these figures, there is no trace of any other source of form or action, than nature itself; his poetic imagination enlarging in style the ideas and the images he had gathered from it. There is not the slightest degree of resemblance of one to another amongst them; they appear to be creatures of different characters as of different forms and periods of life, who neither look or think alike; and are in the farthest degree possible, apart in their composition from any thing like system; except in the grandeur of line, and of style, with which they are treated. Grace and beauty do not appear to have been the guide in their composition, but a research after character and expression; with a rejection of all attention to the antique, except as far as relates to the principles of motion and of grandeur. Yet they are not void altogether of those agreeable qualities. The Delphic Sibyl is beautiful, and moves not without grace, nor the Erythrean: the Isaiah has even elegance in his action; whilst the Cumean Sibyl, the Jeremiah and the Zachariah, are simply grand, and imposing.

In this there is a very sensible difference between the invention of M. Angelo, and of Raffaelle, acting in a manner entirely different upon the minds of others; and in this kind of subject, M. Angelo has completely the advantage

over Raffaelle. On the other hand, the genius of Raffaelle, not leading him so far into abstract speculation, but fraught with abundant images of that which is most exalted in human life, entered into the true mode of illustrating history, with far more engaging, and even impressive power than M. Angelo.

As Raffaelle, in his inventive illustration of facts, frequently conducts us, not only to the immediate scene he represents, but also supplies us with hints of what passed before, and will succeed, as in the Cartoons of Ananias, and the Sacrifice at Lystra; so M. Angelo, condensing expression in action and in look, produces a like effect in those single figures; by actions so full, and combinations of form so ingenious, that we almost see what they had been doing the moment before, and fancy the result. Such is the power of expression in the Delphic Sibyl, the Ezekiel, the Daniel, (who transcribes from a book upheld by the Genius of foreknowledge,) and more particularly in the Isaiah. That figure from an action of repose, or of study of the book of past events, or of knowledge, has turned abruptly to listen to the inspiring dictates of a messenger of divine authority; or in the scheme of arrangement, the Genius cognisant of future events: who, though unseen by the prophet, is evidently engaged in directing his mind to a distant object. What

can be done by painting more effectually to convey a thought, a perception of the mind, that which has no actual existence, but in spirit? We see inspiration personified; and the idea which first arises in our minds when we view this image, is that of the important message delivered to the Jews (as holy writ informs us), by that great prophet.

In the consideration of the merits of this work, it must be recollected, that, excepting the small portions of historical matter it contains in the platfond and in the angles, it is altogether of a poetical nature; the creature of his own imagination; an illustration of important matter drawn from within; embodying sentiment, addressing our mental faculties, requiring the exercise of our reasoning powers, as well as of our taste and judgment in art. In the invention of it, he had no assistance from circumstances; no aid from that congenial feeling, by which the representation of actions expressive of human enjoyment, or of human sufferings, appeal to our sympathies. Almost the whole is ideal! Actions and forms are chosen to impress us, in those grand figures of which I have spoken with the idea of beings of a superior order, endowed with extraordinary intelligence, fitted for the important office of agents of Almighty power and beneficence; and dull must be his mind, and dead to the higher, and

the nobler class of feelings, arising from works of imagination, who can enter that room, and contemplate its ceiling, and not feel that such beings of an exalted nature are before him, and around him; and experience a full justification of the language of Mr. Fuseli, when he said, "We stand in awe of Michel Angelo."

From the remarks I have made you may understand what induced Sir Joshua Reynolds to speak of M. Angelo, in so enthusiastic a manner in his discourses.

I omit, for the present, speaking of the invention displayed by Michel Angelo in the astonishing and terrific groups of the Last Judgment; or of those more engaging combinations of forms and expressions which are seen in the Lunettes and Abaïnos of the Chapel.

From works like these, we learn whence grandeur in painting is derived; for the essential qualities of beauty we must turn to others. But were I to indulge in describing more of the matter which presses forwards to my recollection, of the exercise of invention in the highest class of the art, it would swell this lecture to too inconvenient an extent.

I must rest contented, therefore, with referring you to the great labours of Raffaelle in the Vatican; rivalling, in many points, and in some, excelling the great work of which I have spoken:

to the original works of Julio Romano at Mantua; those of Titian, of Coreggio, of the Carracci, of Poussin, of Rubens, whose inventive faculty extended through the whole region of nature, or rather of its representation by art; and of Rembrandt, for the pathos in many of his works, fully entitles him to rank among these illustrious names, and to the productions of many other ingenious painters. Nor unworthy of the tribute of praise and respect is that admirable example of ingenious invention left us in the poetical work of Mr. Barry in the Adelphi, illustrative of the cultivation and future condition of man; which, though imperfect in its execution and its colouring, drew from Dr. Johnson a remark highly commendatory of the painter: — "Whatever," he observed, "may be said of the merits of the painting, it is evident that the mind has done its duty."

APPENDIX TO LECTURE V.

READ 1831,

INSTEAD OF THE EULOGIUM ON M. ANGELO.

THE perfection of this system is to be found in the works of Raffaelle and M. Angelo; but I shall not now repeat to you the discussion which I have in former lectures entered into, upon the peculiar power of invention which inspired the mind of M. Angelo. Other men, endowed with different qualities of invention, demand regard; and perhaps the influence of the power they exhibited not being of so abstruse a nature, but more immediately resulting from the common circumstances of life, may more easily be applied in the composition of such works as the taste of the present time requires. I will therefore now direct your attention to the beautiful and pure display of the inventive faculty of a painter, in the series of pictures by Raffaelle in the Vatican. In those pictures, the representation of human action and passion excites our minds to the most exalted admiration of the artist, and our

hearts to the most animated feeling; there propriety without insipidity is the presiding principle, and there enthusiastic fervour has evidently been the inspirer of the imagery employed.

If invention be manifested in a manner less imposing by the series of compositions painted by Raffaelle in the chambers of the Vatican, than by that of M. Angelo in its chapel; being less emphatic, more within the extreme boundary of truth, and not presenting when understood such evident and immediate unity of design in its parts; yet being also less abstruse in its quality, having a nearer degree of affinity to human feeling, it affords greater gratification to the world at large in the separate pictures which cover the walls.

The subject for the illustration of which Raffaelle was summoned to Rome, by Pope Julius II. was the establishment and maintenance of the Christian Church; and a subject more proper for adoption in the residence of the head of that Church cannot well be imagined. But the combined symbolical, allegorical, and historical mode adopted for its display being extremely complex, and thereby deprived of more than half the interest it ought to possess, is consequently seldom pursued.

As far as I have been able to trace it from inspections of the work, and with the help of the very slight materials afforded by contemporary authors, it appears that the series of pictures in the chamber first painted, containing the Dispute on the Sacrament, the School of Athens, the Parnassus, and the Jurisprudence, are intended to convey an idea of the church being founded on the strong basis of religion and philosophy; on the blessing of God and the cultivation of man: and in the other chamber where are the Miracle of Bolsena, the Heliodorus, the Attila, St. Peter released from Prison and other pictures, as upheld by many important grants of Divine favour interposed in its behalf. In the School of Theology, or as it is more commonly called, the Dispute on the Sacrament, the holy and revered Doctors of the Church, assembled near the sacred altar, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, (descending from the heavenly hierarchy above), determine that important doctrine of the Roman church, one great resting point of its system, Transubstantiation. In the opposite picture the school of Athens, or more properly the school of Philosophy, we find a symbolical display of the great support to religion derived from the wisdom of man, the influence of cultivation. There, the great heathen philosophers of former ages, are

assembled; and Plato, and Aristotle discuss the nature of the Divine Being, and the adoration due to him, in the presence of a numerous audience; whilst the attainments of diverse branches of science are displayed in other portions of the composition: the whole being intended to declare, that human acquirements in the discovery of truth, prepared the minds of men to receive the more perfect display of it in the revelation of the Gospel.

Upon the same system of reasoning, the refinement of Poetry, which has borne so large a share in polishing and perfecting mental capacity, was adopted and displayed by the assemblage of Poets on Parnassus; where, under Divine influence, (represented by Apollo and the Muses,) Virgil and Ovid and Dante, listen to the strains of Homer. In a fourth picture in the same room we are referred to the united influence of all, by the union of the virtues Fortitude, Prudence, and Temperance; and other pictures, painted in the angles formed by the arched tops of the larger ones, of groups, or of single figures, assist to illustrate the ideas those large pictures are intended to convey.

In the adjoining chamber, the subject of the picture of Theology is supported by the miracle of Bolsena, where drops of blood are seen, by the priest who administers the sacrament to the

Pope, to fall from the consecrated wafer. The intervention of Almighty power in the establishment of the church, is depicted by the miraculous release from prison of its founder and first Bishop, St. Peter: and two instances of its preservation by Divine interference, extended both to its spiritual and its temporal power, are recorded in the same room, by the pictures called the Heliodorus and the Attila. The first symbolically, by representing the punishment inflicted by Divine agents upon sacrilege; and supposed to allude to the destruction of the foes of the church, the powerful Barons who had endeavoured to seize its property but were overcome by the policy of Julius. The other, historically, by a representation of the Arrest of Attila on his way to Rome; first by a vision of St. Peter and St. Paul, with drawn swords in their hands, threatening him with destruction if he advanced farther; and afterwards by treaty with Pope Leo I.

Again, the picture of St. Leo causing by his prayers the cessation of the fire, as seen in the Incendio del Borgo, tends to inspire holy confidence in the Head of the Church, as an immediate agent of heavenly power. The conversion of the Emperor Constantine, seen in one of the pictures, representing his vision of the cross, and his triumph over Maxentius, increased

and confirmed the growth of Christianity; and it was established and extended by other less important events, which are the subjects of other pictures.

Such, appears to be the general scheme of this series of designs from the hand of Raffaelle. What degree of influence Raffaelle might have had in the choice of the subjects it is not possible to say; and it is, I think, but too evident that they are not the product of one mind; as was the work of M. Angelo, who would allow of no interference. So that we must not look to the general mode of treatment of the whole subject as a testimony of the power of invention in the painter, but rather to the mode of representation adopted by him in the composition of the pictures. We find him at first, under the influence of others from whom he had obtained knowledge, and employing early puerilities of art adopted from his master Perugino. In the School of Theology, this influence is evident, and he probably was obliged to adopt the conventional mode in which such subjects had been treated by the older masters; but the beauty of conception in the actions, the forms of drapery, and the expressions of the groups and single figures, leave all preceding works far behind him. When we consider that this picture is of a class which has no specific subject, and has therefore no definite

character, we must conclude, that the extraordinary degree of interest it excites arises altogether from the grandeur of many of the characters, the beauty of the forms, and the intensity of the feeling exhibited in the figures: some absorbed in meditation, some intent upon books, others engaged in conversation; and others, as are the younger persons introduced, eagerly listening to the discussions of their elders.

In the School of Philosophy, he had the same difficulty to contend with as to subject, and overcame it with still greater success. A more independent mode of thought is evident in it, the puerilities I have alluded to, are discarded, and propriety and variety in beautiful composition are the distinguishing points of its character. We naturally enquire, as with the former picture, whence this anomalous work becomes so gratifying? why are we led to revisit it again and again, and still to find new pleasure, or a renewal of the old in contemplating it? It has no historical interest, no particular lustre or brilliancy of colour in its favour; it has no peculiar intelligence of chiaro-oscuro; it has no female beauty, or even manly beauty in any considerable degree to attract and beguile the observer. It is simply a beautiful disposition of beautiful and graceful forms, principally of draperies, and of agreeable hues of colour. But,

it is peopled with intelligent beings, who are engaged in a manner which shows them to be of a superior order; the animated forms it presents have so much intelligence of countenance and of expression, are so arranged in relation to each other, or placed apart in attitudes so appropriate to their acknowledged qualities of mind, that our minds feel congenial sentiments with theirs; we would desire to act, if so circumstanced, as they do; to think, as they appear to think; and herein, I believe, we find the secret of its attraction. We are gratified to find such justness of invention, and such truth of imagery: and when we add the attraction caused by the beauty of form in the combinations, and draperies of the figures, and their union with the grand lines of the architecture, we are led to examine and re-examine them with increasing delight, as we more and more recognise their propriety and truth. If other inventions of more glowing or terrific imagery excite more powerful emotions, their influence is neither so durable, nor so valuable. The degree of excellence in invention here depicted by Raffaelle arose from the mode of study pursued by his predecessors from the time of Giotto, who is the real author of this just and unaffected mode of thinking and inventing pictures; which being upheld to the time of Raffaelle with various

success, he happily found congenial with his own mind and employed it; and by the addition of variety, and grace, brought it to perfection.

M. Angelo, with the same example before him, chose to take another course; and still keeping the natural image of the mind of man in view, as made visible in his actions, gave a more complete ideal turn to the art; and if he did not, like Raffaelle, improve it in historical representation, he provided a good and great substitute; where animation and expression reigning, in spite of occasional caprice, is always the predominating quality. But how infinitely more congenial to our minds, more satisfactory to our judgment is Raffaelle's representation, in one of the angles above the picture of the School of Theology, of the fall of our first parents, than that of M. Angelo in the Sistina! and wherefore? M. Angelo's has far more beauty in the figure of Eve, more energy in that of Adam, and there is more activity in the Tempter, all important points, which well disposed must have given the preference to his picture. Yet few unprejudiced persons can willingly do so! We feel directly on regarding the picture, that the actions do not arise from the natural impulse of the subject: they are of the painter, and are more composed, than felt, by him. They therefore fail to move us. On the other hand we

feel the actions invented by Raffaelle to be such as would naturally arise from the circumstances of the subject. The woman, overcome by the glozing agent of evil, takes the fruit from the tree of knowledge; and with an action direct and simple presents it to her husband; he receives it in a manner well invented for the purpose of contrast, and with earnestness strengthening the simplicity of its expression.

This direct and constant attention given by Raffaelle to the natural claims of his subject, led M. Fuseli, to observe, that "propriety rocked his cradle." It is spread over all his works in the Vatican, as well as in the Cartoons around you; and if he was tempted to swerve from it, in the introduction of Julius II. into the Jewish Temple, during the scene where we see the punishment of Heliodorus, we must conclude that his better judgment was overpowered by the influence of courtly adulation in those who surrounded him. In that picture, where (notwithstanding this anachronism) we see an admirable display of human feeling, we also see a vivid instance of the energy of the invention of Raffaelle, in the peculiar province of a painter, in those superhuman beings who descend to scourge the intruder from the sacred precincts, or overwhelm him with their power; and particularly in the two young men who accompany the

figure on horseback, whose energy and activity, can only be compared to "the swift-winged arrows of light."

The supposition I have ventured to express, that the introduction of Julius, was the product of courtly adulation, is supported by that of Leo X. into the picture of Attila, with far more evil effect; since it deprives the principal person of the scene, ATTILA, of the importance which properly belonged to him. There is a design existing for this picture, made by Raffaelle before the death of Julius, in which its subject appears to be the vision of St. Peter and St. Paul to the rude monarch. A group of horsemen and other figures occupy the space in advance of him, and the Pope with his attendants are seen coming at a distance. Thus, unity of effect in the composition was preserved. But Julius died ere the picture was begun, and Leo X., desirous of seeing the decorations of the stanze completed, was, probably, also desirous of enjoying that eternity of fame given to his predecessor by his introduction into the Heliodorus. The Pope, therefore, Leo I., was transplanted from the background to the front of the picture, and placed under the protection of the visionary Apostles, with the head of Leo X. upon his shoulders; and with him two of his Cardinals and other attendants, all portraits of then existing persons.

Thus, the unity of the subject is destroyed; Attila, continuing enwrapt in wonder and awe at the celestial vision, as in the original design, and paying no attention whatever to the Pope who is addressing him. By this, as by many other instances, it is apparent that if the Church of Rome has been the reviver and nourisher of art, in modern times; it has in return enjoyed a full share of importance from it, and of influence over its practice; and many things objectionable in the paintings of the time, must be attributed to that influence. In this particular case, we cannot doubt, that Raffaelle found himself compelled to bend to it, and to sacrifice the feelings of the painter, exhibited elsewhere so pure, so powerful, and so just, to the policy of the courtier.

LECTURE VI.

ON DESIGN.

1828.

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ON DESIGN.

I NOW proceed to discuss the principles of the art of painting, and shall first treat of Design as the basis of the whole.

No efficient image is presented to the mind by the materials employed in the art of painting; they require modification, by union with, or by opposition to each other, ere they can produce to us ideas of sensible imagery; and it is by the well-ordering or regulating of those required unions or contrasts, either of lines or of colours, and the disposal of them in forms best adapted for the production of character, of expression, or of beauty, that those rules have been devised which are called the principles of the art of painting.

They may be divided into two classes; first, its elementary principles, or those which regard the immediate use of the materials of the art; as design, composition, colouring, and chiaro-oscuro; and, secondly, its governing or directing

principles, consisting in the regulations by which its elementary ones are best employed; that is, best apportioned and arranged, for the fulfilment of the purposes intended. These latter have been deduced from experience. They are the product of the labours of intelligent artists, employed in extracting from Nature the knowledge of her most engaging or most affecting combinations of the three great *visual* agents of effect upon our minds, form, light and shade, and colour.

But though these principles have been made manifest to us in a very considerable degree by the exertions of able men, and fine examples of their truth, and beauty, and power, are transmitted to us in their works; yet, such is the amazing extent of the variety under which natural combinations act upon our senses, that they still are the subjects of the empire of taste; which, not content with more exactness of imitation in painting, superadds refinement.

Whenever, therefore, I speak of the superior or governing principles of the art, by which those that are elementary are directed, I desire to be understood, as only pointing out how they may be advantageously employed! but not, as attempting to confine their application, precisely, to any given arrangement; or prescribing a boundary to the controlling and subtle power,

which we denominate taste; the feeling and comprehension of truth, in art as well as in nature! The ready agent for the production and the enjoyment of that which is beautiful! That keen and elevated sense of perfection in the mind of an ingenious artist, which continually directs him in the refinement and improvement of beauty, or of character, till expression be perfected; be it of whatsoever it may!

The elementary principles of the art are more tangible, if I may so say; and we may speak of them with far less of uncertainty. Perhaps we may say, that the application of them, for the mere purpose of the imitation of natural objects, may be scientifically acquired.

But the highest aim of the art of painting, that to which I desire to direct your attention, is not founded on imitation alone, as ordinarily understood. The aim of an artist ought to be, to excite the mind of man, not only to that pleasure which ingenious imitation affords, but to deeper emotion; and when the art is conducted to that true point of its perfection, it then alone becomes entitled to the appellation of a liberal art. Thus employed, its value is, indeed, of an exalted rank in the scale of human enjoyments: by its means we may be said to possess an extended scale of knowledge, and enjoy a lengthened period of existence; whilst in its lower

state, or that of mere imitation, its greatest claim to respect, is but in proportion to its utility, in affording pleasure to the eye, without further object or end; or as the humble attendant and assistant of science.

Imitation is, indeed, the natural source of the art, and was, for a time, its only object; but as the views of men became enlarged in their application of it, and they were induced to attempt the representation of ideal scenes, it became necessary for them to investigate the principles, by which nature operates upon our minds in her most impressive or most enchanting scenery. Hence, it is far better for the minds of sensible men, engaged in the practice of the art, to commence with a system, which experience may correct; than to wander in the mazes of uncertainty, from which they may never escape.

By system in painting, I mean a combination of principles, or rules for the practice of the art, derived from the accumulations of experience; pointing out the necessities of practice, and the readiest modes of overcoming them. In fact, those governing principles of the art of which I have before spoken.

It is by a system so framed, that when we undertake to imitate in painting the works of nature, we endeavour to correct their general, or ordinary appearance. There is, however, but

one foundation for such a system, upon which we ought to confide; and that is, a constant recurrence to nature herself; or, a constant observation of the great varieties in each class of her productions, till by a perfect knowledge of them we become capable of selecting the best for our guide. The necessity of thus recurring to nature for the improvement of her productions, has been beautifully, and effectively, though somewhat enigmatically, defined by Shakspeare, who says: —

> "Nature is made better by no mean,
> But nature makes that mean: so o'er that art,
> Which we say adds to nature, is an art
> That nature makes. The art itself, is nature." *

I said, in my last lecture, that design or drawing, the first in order of the Elementary Principles of Painting, was the immediate agent of invention; the medium by which an artificial image becomes significant of a real one.

This principle of the art, in the sense in which I now employ it, is a pure intellectual invention of man, without a prototype in nature; producing an arbitrary sign of an idea conceived in the mind of the external form of a thing, but having no actual existence itself.

* He is speaking of the improvement of the richness and beauty of flowers, and tells us that it cannot be done, without employing the means presented by nature.

The effect which natural objects produce upon our sense of vision, is that of a number of parts, or distinct masses of form and colour, and not of lines. But when we endeavour to represent by painting those objects which are before us or which invention supplies to our minds, the first, and the simplest means we resort to is this fiction; by which we separate the form of each object from those that surround it, marking its boundary, the extreme extent of its dimensions in every direction, as impressed on our vision; and this is termed drawing its outline.

By association of ideas in our minds such an outline, when correctly drawn, and aided by a few other lines, marking within it other characteristic forms of the figure it surrounds, excites in our imaginations a perfect image of its subject. That image will, indeed, be more or less perfect, according to the degree of information, or force of imagination, in the beholder; but as he has no other means of comparison than with the knowledge and the reasoning power of his own mind, its impression must be considered as complete. Fill it with colour, attempt to give it light and shade and the appearance of real substance, and the figure it creates becomes subject to other comparisons, which, if each portion of the art be not perfectly effected must necessarily diminish its force.

Its simplicity, therefore, is the basis of its power.

I need but refer you for illustration of the truth of this to that interesting and beautiful series of designs from Homer, Dante, Æschylus, and Hesiod, by our late esteemed and lamented Professor of Sculpture, Mr. Flaxman. In regarding many of those excellent designs, our minds are so filled with figure, action, and expression, that we shrink with fear at the idea of any attempt at further completion of them, by light, and shade, and colour; lest the undisturbed, and therefore entire impression they create, should be destroyed.

How valuable a portion then of the art of painting is design, which, in laying a foundation for the display of the entire power of that art, so nearly attains its utmost influence over us! It is the only principle of the art which in *itself* possesses such a degree of power; colour, and light and shade, being of no effect without it, and composition chiefly dependent upon it.

When we give due consideration to this, we cannot be surprised that the great Florentine painters attached the utmost consequence to it, and made it their principal study; their object being not merely to please the eye, but to impress sentiment on the mind: or that the Caracci,

when endeavouring to combine all the peculiar merits of the various schools wherein the different principles of the art obtained support, still gave the preference to drawing. "Drawing," said Annibal, "is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the art." Of the truth of this observation, taking it with a liberal view, experience convinces me more and more; if character, if expression, if beauty and grace, be the best and most proper objects of the art of painting.

The basis of effect in design is correctness; from knowledge it derives character and expression; style, beauty, and grace, are superadded to it by taste!

Possession of skill in design is one of the most enviable enjoyments of the painter; and to be capable of drawing a line at once correct and free, and fitted to its purpose, is to possess an instrument of power over all the attributes of the art of painting. It gives freedom and command of hand, from whence arise all the beauties of execution. It enables a painter to dispose every touch of his pencil with understanding, with clearness, and with energy; it exhibits knowledge, and aids in preserving clearness of colour: above all, it is the sure guide to the attainment of that vivid expression of character, the most engaging quality of a picture. All who have practised the art of painting must be aware of

the vast advantage arising from the possession of such power.

You may judge of the estimation in which it was held by the ancients, from the story (which is a well-attested fact) of the contest between Apelles and Protogenes. To draw a line, to exhibit command of hand, either by delicacy or grace in guiding a point, had become the test of genius in a painter; and the example thus afforded was preserved to the days of Pliny, who saw it at Rome, a cherished monument of the talents of the Grecian painters.

Such was the importance attached to design by the schools of Italy, that it was cultivated even to excess in the lower period of their existence. That excess, however, proves nothing adverse to the principle itself; it rather exhibits the sense entertained by the Italian painters of the strong claim its inherent excellence has upon our attention, and should operate as a guide to the true use of it.

I wish to impress this strongly upon your minds. Our school, our national school of painting, is perhaps too much dependent upon the attractive and engrossing influence of colouring, and of chiaro-oscuro; and from what I have observed in our schools and in our exhibitions, it is likely still to continue so, if we fail in our endeavours to elicit in the minds of the students a sense of the value

of lines. The liberal principles upon which this Institution is conducted, permit each student to follow in his studies, the dictates of his own taste. Without being at all desirous of violating the freedom thus sanctioned, I feel it incumbent upon me to say, that I regret to find so few young artists who seem to think of outline for itself, as it well deserves to be thought of; or of the value of being able to draw a distinct character of form by it! Form is most generally produced, as light and shade corrects the figure it creates, upon an unformed and imperfect basis. Thus the figure is modelled as it were, not drawn; and in separate portions, instead of an intelligent, and well-understood boundary being created at first, to receive the completion afforded by shadow.

By this mode we have, indeed, the gratification of seeing a number of ingenious figures produced. As the end is pleasing, and the manner delusive, we can scarcely wonder that it should be resorted to by those who are unconscious of the risk they encounter; who know not, perhaps, that in thus separately imitating the parts, they are in danger of losing sight of the whole; that they would obtain the knowledge of the human figure as sought by the painter much quicker, and far more effectively, were they to draw its varied forms and actions correctly by

lines; and that at the same time they would with more certainty obtain those important qualities of an artist, correctness of eye and steadiness and command of hand.

No principle of the art of painting merits, nor indeed requires, more attention than design; and none so well rewards the time bestowed upon it. I cannot, therefore, too earnestly direct your attention to it whilst youth is in your favour, and whilst you enjoy the advantages afforded by the schools of this Institution for the cultivation of it.

The instrument of the mind, in realising by painting the ideas it has conceived, is the hand; and a careful cultivation of its powers by continued practice is therefore absolutely necessary, in order that the mind may not be impeded in its operations. It flags in its energy, if it have not a ready and a correct agent to obey its dictates. You have all, I doubt not, seen many a spirited sketch beaming with intelligence when the idea which formed its basis was freely, though slightly sketched, evaporate to dulness when finished, and principally, because the hand of the artist was not duly qualified to satisfy his mind in the execution of the work at once. On these occasions, repeated and imperfect essays engage the mind in the correction of trifles, and attract its attention from the essence of the matter.

This is one of the evils which follow the want of attention to the mechanical part of the art, drawing, or execution.

He who seeks those honours which attach to the reputation of a great painter, ought to maintain every estimable quality of the art in as high a degree of perfection as his power permits. It is not enough to ensure to him the highest praise, that, by fretting his canvass, labouring to satisfy feeling, undirected by principle and unskilful in touch, he at length produces an effect which at a given distance becomes agreeable. Though it be true, that power of effect combined with propriety is the main point in the completion of a picture, yet it is by much the most estimable when wrought with a master hand; when painted with a certainty and freedom of style indicative of intelligence in the mind of the artist; and most highly will he be esteemed, who thus unites mechanical skill with the mental power which directs and controls it; presenting a work of art valuable in both points.

The same principle acts in poetry, and other works of literature. How exceedingly is our enjoyment of ingenious thoughts increased, when they are conveyed to us in unconstrained and beautiful language!

Through those periods of civil cultivation in Greece, when the minds of the people were so

far only advanced, that real personal character was preserved and freely exhibited, the arts proceeded though slowly, yet surely, in their career; and under the most favourable auspices for procuring the knowledge of true form in the human figure. In attending the Gymnasia, and in witnessing warlike exercises, in the dress and the manners of the people, their artists had constant opportunities of studying varieties of figure and of expression, in look and in action, of men under various kinds and degrees of excitation; exulting in hope, alive to the glory of victory, or subdued by the shame of defeat. Joy, fear, rage, despair, must have been continually displayed before them, united to all the pleasing blandishments of youth and beauty, or the impressive characteristic forms of strength, and agility.

Thus powerfully nourished, the talents of the Grecian artists, ripened to that perfection in the knowledge of the beauty of man, which fitted them for the bright periods of Pericles and Alexander.

Our Professor of Sculpture has shown to us how they advanced from the rudest attempts at imitation of an individual model, to the completion of that beautiful, and select form which we find in many of the Elgin marbles, in the Torso, the Laocoon, the Gladiator, &c., and when engaged in the representation of their

Deities, to the most perfect purity of form of which the human figure seems capable without entirely losing its vital character, its locomotive power. Such we see it united with grace and grandeur in the Apollo, with elegance in the Venus, with strength in the Hercules, and with varied powers in others, which I need not mention.

The great value of the study of the human form as presented to us by these admirable remnants of antiquity, consists principally in the opportunity they afford us of acquiring an elevated idea of its true beauty, and the knowledge of the best mode of extracting from nature herself improvement upon her own productions, by an union of beautiful shapes selected from the mass. In failing to take advantage of so favourable a circumstance as our possession of these exquisite works, and declining to obtain through them knowledge so essential to the progress of art, seeking it for ourselves from the endless variety of nature, we should but lengthen our labours; but by using them as the basis of our studies, we have the advantage of mechanical practice acting upon established theoretical principles; by which, without the trouble of research, we almost insensibly become acquainted with the theory itself which produced such excellent works.

Forms, such as we behold in those statues, throughout the whole of a figure, and which were imitated by the painters, we can have no reason to conclude were often, if ever, seen by the Greeks among their fellow men; but every portion, such as they have represented them, they may have seen; and being, by comparison, made sensible of their perfection, and guided by a refinement of taste generated in progression through centuries of culture, they combined those admirable portions of many to produce the most beautiful whole; as the only means they had of embodying in the human form the imaginary perfections of their divinities.

This principle, we know by historical record, governed the sculptor, Polycletus, when he made his statue called the Rule; and was the guide of Zeuxis when he painted his Venus for the inhabitants of Crotona, or his Helen for those of Agrigentum; and is frequently mentioned by ancient authors as the well-known governing principle of artists. It is the first essay of that system of art to which I have alluded, and in illustration of which I made the quotation from Shakspeare, so truly and pithily describing it.

That this is a fair and legitimate, and even necessary mode of forming a system of art, few will deny.

The great Author of nature has ordained a

varying and never-ceasing change of form throughout creation; and that infinite variety of feature and of expression which we behold among mankind, has its source in a departure from the purity of primitive, or generic and essential form. Hence, each individual variety, more or less, partakes of deformity, and must of necessity do so. Strictly speaking, there can be but two specific forms of the human figure perfectly beautiful, as male and female. Every change which stamps peculiar feature, or character, the approach of age, or the attack of disease, is a deterioration of that form, inasmuch as it is a departure from it; and upon the same principle we may speak of all classes of objects, animate or inanimate.

But this severe view of the matter is merely given to show the basis of excellence in design, when artists seek to impress on their works the stamp of beauty. Custom has long entitled us to say that there is beauty, that is, a peculiar degree of beauty, in every class, in every race, and in every age of man; and thus authorised, we have an equal right to speak of the beauty of the Hercules as of the Apollo, of an old man, as of one in the prime of manhood. Propriety of character, then, becomes the source of beauty.

Though nature be thus potent as our guide, if we rest contented with the mere surface it pre-

sents, and do not penetrate into the most secluded retreats of its perfections; if we seek not to draw refreshment from the fountain of that excellence which is bestowed on all the productions of nature in part, but confided in totality to few; if we take the changeable portions of its labours for the immutable; we must deceive ourselves. Beauty, and perfection which constitutes beauty, is that immutable portion; and we, who can at best but imperfectly rival the appearance of the meanest of the productions of nature, can present it to view but in one unchangeable character, are compelled, in order to ensure the greatest degree of success in our attempts at rivalry with her, to seek the display of each object under the most favourable circumstances; that is, to obtain and to exhibit the knowledge of the most perfect, or the most beautiful form, appropriate to the peculiar qualities of that object.

It is not necessary for me here to discuss the question, whether, as philosophers have generally asserted, our perception of beauty arises from association of ideas, and be therefore unfounded, as, if this be true it must, upon any stable principle, but changeable as time and circumstance; or whether its basis may be found in the organisation of the eye, as allied to a native prin-

ciple in the mind, imparted to men in varied degrees, and improvable by cultivation.

I must not be thought to treat this mysterious problem as unworthy of our regard, when I say, that we may pursue our labours beneficially without entering into so subtle a disquisition.

We have no need to adopt either of these principles to their full extent. It is sufficient for our immediate purpose, that, assisted as we are by a variety of means, we know and feel that there is a specific character in things which we call beautiful; and that, in minor matters, in things where essential character of another kind finds a faint existence, to us, and for us, there is a resident beauty; principally the result of well-regulated proportions. We recognise in it the division of a line, upon which the beauty of architecture entirely depends; we seek for it in the turn of a line, from whence arises the pleasure we enjoy in looking at the Greek vases; we find it in the combinations of lines, of forms, and of colours, as displayed in flowers; it is the object of our research as we vary such combinations in our pictures; as we regulate their proportions, or their quantities, and adjust their order and arrangement. Most frequently we are not sensible of seeking it with any other view than to gratify our sense of vision, and by that, the aspirings of

our minds after perfection; though it is true, that it is most engaging when associated with character or expression in the thing or being represented.

For the ear, proportions and combinations of sound producing beautiful, or rather delightful music, have been mathematically demonstrated; and assisted by that demonstration, conjoined to his experience, Beethoven when deaf, composed symphonies which continue to delight the musical world.

Nothing of the kind has yet been done for the certain production of forms agreeable to the eye; and we are yet left to imbibe our knowledge of the most pleasing and impressive directions and divisions of lines, and compounds of forms and of colours, from the feelings of our own minds, or as instructed by the works of the greatest painters. Those among us, who by nature or by education are endowed with the most refined taste, find it at once; others arrive at the perception of it slowly; and some there are who never attain a glimpse of it. Yet, it is evidently to our advantage, as we know it to be consonant to the progress of taste in the fine arts, to believe, that we may improve our sense of beauty, and increase our store of that principle which decides upon beauty, which is taste; by assiduous cultivation,

by continual reflection upon the forms in which it has long been acknowledged to reside, and by study of those works of art which are most grateful to the eyes of cultivated and tasteful artists.

I have already referred you to the statues of the Greeks for the attainment of the knowledge of beauty in the human form, and of that systematic mode employed by their authors in investigating the works of nature, which led them to the understanding of truth.

But though the sculpture thus produced presents to us the most perfect examples of the human form, the application of them to the purposes of painting is attended with considerable difficulty. They have diverted the attention of the modern schools of painting on the Continent from the just exercise of the more extensive powers of that art; confined its scope, and rendered it dependent on sculpture, till it became a mere imitator of it; not in the forms of figures only, but in those of the draperies that invest them.

The painter, while cultivating his taste in design by the study of those beautiful works, should remember the different objects of the arts of sculpture and of painting, as well as the different degrees of capability in the materials they employ.

I may say, as, indeed, the Professor of Sculpture has said before me, that the limits of the imitative power of sculpture are far within those of painting. The hard, and in measure intractable materials of which its productions are composed, necessarily prescribe those limits; and present peculiarities of effect uncongenial to the more exact and extensive purposes of imitation which are permitted to the painter; or rather, indeed, are required of him. When employed in figures representative of the heathen divinities, its forms are applicable to them alone; and can only be closely imitated with propriety by the painter in subjects poetical or classical, where those divinities are introduced. But the spirit, which directed the Greek sculptors in their selections from nature, is fitted for the purposes of both arts; and their having so admirably employed it, renders their statues and bas-reliefs the fittest objects for the study and cultivation of taste in form.

By these works we become acquainted with what has been termed style in Design, and more particularly the Grand style, or an appropriate selection and application of the most beautiful form. This style adds beauty to character, and grace to motion; and, rejecting the superfluities of taste, employs its best qualities to strengthen

the expression of natural and refined character in all things.

The knowledge of those select forms, and the power of drawing them acquired, the next object for attention is the comprehension of that *spirit* which dictated the selection. By comparing the forms of the antique with those usually presented by nature in the living figure, you will the most readily surmount this difficulty. It is that living figure, however, which painters are called upon to represent, with all its moving powers, and ever-varying union of part with part; it must, therefore, be the main object of your study. A constant reference to this privilege, or this necessity of the art of painting, will enable you safely to conduct your studies from the antique statues; and, while the benefit to your taste derivable from them may be obtained, you may avoid the coldness, the hardness, and fixedness of form, which is too often apparent in the works of those painters, who, neglecting the shrine of nature, have worshipped with too confined and partial devotion the divinities of the Greeks; and who have paid the forfeit for so doing in the disregard of mankind.

It seems almost idle to lay down rules for the application and direction of lines in design, unless as general principles to be employed under

the regulation of propriety; since all kinds and their combinations are rendered agreeable by an appropriate use of them.

Thus, we may say, as a general regulating principle, that acute or right angles, ought, as much as possible, to be avoided; that when formed by the limbs of figures, they are unfavourable to grace and beauty; but they are frequently available for expression. Of parallel lines the same may be said; yet Raffaelle has frequently and beautifully employed figures in parallel directions, to enforce expression in the most direct manner; and even introduced parallel lines in their draperies. The eye, however, generally speaking, demands variety for its gratification; hence, a long straight line produces of itself no sense of beauty; but, when divided into well-regulated proportions, or quantities in its extent, that sense is elicited; variety being superinduced upon its uniformity. On the other hand, if those quantities are not well regulated, deformity or ugliness will be generated. Straightness in the contours of limbs, or of folds of drapery, produces meanness of character; and flowing lines fulness and beauty; when the curvatures which create fulness are enlarged, greatness and grandeur are the result; and when carried to excess, their product is grossness, even

to deformity. From these varieties Style in design takes its different appellations.

It was among the painters in the school of Florence that design was most assiduously cultivated with attention to refinement of form. Others have employed it, as did the Venetians, the Flemings, and the Dutch, in more direct imitation of the ordinary productions of nature; and others again, as Coreggio and Rubens, to suit their own peculiar taste in colour and chiaro-oscuro.

Though I am fully conscious of the ability with which these different styles of design have been adopted and executed, yet I feel it to be incumbent upon me, here, constantly to direct your attention to the purest and the best, as it is seen in the works of the Florentines. If, in your future exertions, you choose to adopt a style more ornamental, the knowledge of that, sanctioned, as it has been, by the highest authorities, from the Greeks downwards, cannot fail to be useful to you.

The best works, by the most important among the founders of the Italian school of painting, after the restoration of the art, exhibit the principle of simplicity and rotundity of form to a considerable degree. Afterwards, it rather lost in influence, till Masaccio appeared; the grander principle of imitation merging in that produced by the

less philosophic mode of viewing nature. From the time of Masaccio, aided by the discovery of the ancient works of sculpture and painting, a higher and a purer taste prevailed; and design was cultivated and exhibited, as we see it in the grand works of painting produced in the sixteenth century.

It is delightful, and it may be the most useful mode of cultivating your knowledge of the best principles of style in design, to trace its growth under the influence of the taste and skill displayed in the paintings of Raffaelle; the progress of no other artist of renown being so perfectly defined.

We perceive it in his course, not from meanness, for he was never mean in design; but from timid gentleness and adherence in a great degree to his particular model in figure and in drapery; to that fulness and freedom, and grandeur of line, which for its peculiar degree of excellence we term style. You may see its progress in the prints from his pictures. The increase of style in his design is traceable from his first visit to Florence. His tractable spirit, governed by good sense, and alive to truth and beauty, by degrees was induced to abandon the confined yet not vulgar style of his master, Perugino. He increased the flow of his line, and no longer introduced into his backgrounds those small and

unimportant objects which are found in his early works.

The paintings of Fra Bartolomeo, and the cartoons of Da Vinci and Michel Angelo, we may reasonably suppose produced in a great degree this change; so that, when he was called upon to paint in the Vatican, he was prepared to enter upon that important work with well-cultivated and well-directed powers. The elevated view of art and of its due quality of imitation, the knowledge of which he had then imbibed, led him gradually onwards to aggrandise his line, and give fulness while he maintained simplicity of form; and before he had the opportunity of seeing the Capella Sistina, he had painted the Dispute on the Sacrament, the School of Athens, the Parnassus, and the Jurisprudence, and begun upon the Heliodorus; and in all of them, in their different periods, had evidently, and gradually, and greatly improved in style of design. In the latter of these pictures we find the perfection of his own native taste in design, as drawn from various sources. In the Jurisprudence it is chaste and pure in its character, and perfectly in unison with antique female form; and in the group of females in the Heliodorus he evidently sought, through nature, to realise the beauties of the ideal style of the ancients. There is a gentle undulation in his line, which gives ful-

ness and rotundity of form entirely correspondent to that of the marbles; and the proportions are always admirably maintained in their scale, by which we are led to forget that that scale is short. It wants somewhat of that elegance which may be found in the best Greek statues, and was carried to excess by Parmigiano; but, if regulated by the excellent sense of Raffaelle, might not perhaps have been an unfavourable addition to the grace of his actions and the beauty of his style.

This improvement, then, we may principally attribute to his study of the remnants of antiquity. The Galatea, the series from the story of Cupid and Psyche in the Farnesina, and the allegorical figures in the Vatican, all exhibit the application of taste drawn from this source; but, as Mengs has observed with great appearance of truth, he drew his information chiefly from bas-reliefs, the proportions of his figures partaking of the character seen in those works, rather than in that of the statues. He scrupled not, it seems very clear, to borrow from all around him; from his contemporaries, as well as from those who had preceded him; growing more powerful in the application of his native taste, as much from such judicious conduct as by the force of his own reflections. At length he saw, and powerfully felt the immense advance in style of

design made by Michel Angelo, and thanked God that he was born in the same age with so extraordinary a man; so at least say his biographers. The character of gradual progress to enlarged style which his own studies had taught him, immediately ceased; and he at once attempted to unite the grandeur of style of Angelo to his own pure composition.

This union is first particularly observable, in the group where Heliodorus is suffering under the lash of those terribly animated superhuman beings, the instruments of divine vengeance, inflicting the punishment due to his sacrilegious impiety. A comparison of the forms in that portion of the picture, with those of the beautiful group of women in the middle ground on the other side, bears decisive testimony to the truth of this remark. The difference of the general style of design may be seen in the print, but is much more observable in the painting; where it is accompanied by a bravura of execution, not in unison with the other parts, nor found in the previous works of this admirable artist.

In this point, enlargement of style seems at first to have led him to an exaggerated degree of freedom of execution, even to coarseness; and to neglect that beauty and elegance which he had previously sought. So difficult is it for any man, however highly endowed, to labour with

the spirit of another when the native bent of his own mind is different in quality, and his early studies have not prepared him for such an exercise of its power!

But over this excess of freedom, the good sense and exquisite taste of Raffaelle prevailed; and his attempt at the union of an enlarged principle of style in design, with his own just feeling of propriety in composition, has left the finest examples of beautiful art for our delight and contemplation.*

It was not in the forms of the naked figure only that Raffaelle applied this increase of style in design. We see it also in his drapery; but without any abandonment of that taste in the general employment of its foldings, which he had derived from his early studies, had seen in the pictures of his master, Pietro Perugino, and found confirmed by the sound judgment of Fra Bartolomeo. Still, the flow of its outline in his latter works is of a larger character than in the School of Athens, or the Parnassus; and creating more breadth of form. Such you see it in the figure of St. Paul before Felix, and in that of St. Paul preaching at Athens, and its style is more evident if you compare it with that of the figure

* This is nowhere better exhibited than in the picture of the Madonna del Sisto, at Dresden.

by Masaccio, from whence its action was taken.* Indeed, it is most perfectly visible throughout the cartoons now before you; which cannot in this respect be too much studied.

What is then this quality in design, which such a man as Raffaelle sought so eagerly to combine with his own extraordinary perceptions of the beauty of art; as capable of increasing the unrivalled lustre of his works in other points?

Wherein the peculiar excellence of that style resides which so great a painter thought worthy of his emulation, must be an important object for our consideration.

It is the glory of Michel Angelo! To obtain it, he frequently proceeded to the confines of affectation in action, and excess in line. Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that he not unfrequently passed the bounds prescribed by propriety. It was not beauty which he sought, as commonly understood, that, is more perfectly displayed in the antique statues, though his statue of Bacchus possesses it in a high degree. His great principle seems to have been to obtain the character of motion, as designative of life, by variety and fulness of line, and by contrast; and this, when added to beauty, infinitely increases

* St. Paul exhorting St. Peter to firmness while suffering imprisonment for his faith in Jesus Christ; painted in the church of the Carmelites, at Florence.

its power. For that purpose was his precept given to Marcus da Sienna, his pupil, as related by Lomazzo; that he "should always make his figure pyramidal, serpentlike, and multiplied by one, two, three:" and this oracle of the great master was evidently the overwrought guide of his successors, till they lost the true spirit of its object, in the mere application of its words.

This principle of motion, he is said to have confirmed in his own mind, if not found it, by study from the Torso, which, according to Vasari, and Condivi, and after them Lanzi, he repeatedly drew; and it so pervades the picture of the Last Judgment, that we are fully justified in believing the report.

To produce one undisturbed impression on the mind, largeness in the flow of his line creating breadth of form, was his medium; rejecting all unessential parts, though not, with the severity of the Greek sculptors, inattentive to minor ones, in the markings of the bones and tendons of his figures. Even in his sculpture of allegorical figures, the Night and Morning on the tombs of the Medici, he is not found an implicit follower of the forms of the antique: but, impelled by his desire to convey motion, has given to them less abstract ideas of form.

Though he fondly displayed his anatomical knowledge in his naked figures, it is not done

with that coarse character of dissected forms, which draughtsmen, and his mistaken imitators, have given to us. I have not unfrequently seen living models so formed as exactly to present the style of design of Michel Angelo, such as he selected from nature as best suited to his grand and elevated views of the art*; and it was not by extravagant departure from nature, as many conclude, that he formed his principles; but by careful selection from it ennobling style in design, without destroying truth of imitation in its general character.† The line which Raffaelle chose, when at his best, was more gentle than Angelo's; less convex, and with less of occasional acuteness; the muscles not so full, nor so much in action; and the parts of the joints less distinctly marked. Hence, the sensation it creates is more agreeable, but less forcible in expression.

Raffaelle in his youth, in pursuance of the decencies required by the church at that period, engaged in painting subjects, where a display of draperies, rather than of the human figure, was required, does not appear to have been perfectly

* The prize-fighter Jones, once a model in the Royal Academy, was one of them.

† In the collection of the late Sir Thomas Lawrence there are many careful drawings by Michel Angelo; studies, from nature, of figures introduced into the picture of the Last Judgment.

versed in it: whereas, Michel Angelo from his earliest engagement in the arts of sculpture and painting, made it his principal study.

The style therefore of the design of Raffaelle in that particular, is less learned and less free than that of Angelo; whose style, on the other hand, is of too lofty a character for common use. The forms produced by his convex lines are applicable to few purposes in their full extent; but to all, in the spirit which guided him.

No greater mistake can be committed, than to take his line for a guide at all times; except, neglecting to cultivate that deep consideration of expression in action and in look, which he obtained by it; and by which his figures are, to me at least, rendered infinitely more impressive, than by his style alone; which has in general been the only theme of his admirers.

In the general movements of the figures of Michel Angelo, he was careful to give distinct character to the actions of the various parts of the body and its members. In the unity of action which reigns throughout his best figures, each portion of the trunk has its peculiar share well defined. The thorax moves upon the abdomen without dragging it onwards, the neck on the shoulders, the head upon the neck; and each joint of the limbs is admirably adjusted, in regard to the same kind of separate, yet united

line of action. It is this, if I mistake not, which is the main-spring of the energy found in his design; where the eye, in its rapid glance, starts, as it were, from each division, with increasing animation as it courses over the whole; and finds these varying forms and actions uniting to one end. When this is not done, but the various parts are made to glide imperceptibly into each other, more beauty, it is true, is acquired; but tameness and languor impair their power over it. His great support in adopting this effective system, was doubtless his vast knowledge of the anatomical structure of the human figure; which enabled him to overcome with ease, the most difficult foreshortenings. The proportions of his figures are rendered grand in their scale by the smallness of their heads and of their hands and feet; and the fulness of line with which the muscles and the knittings of the bones are delineated, adds to that grandeur.

If I am right, the basis of this style of design is applicable to imitations of all things; and worthy of our most serious study. But the boundary which unites it to excess, shows us a fearful abyss adjoining, to which it insensibly leads the unskilful, or the unwary; and the danger which accompanies the attempt to imitate and apply his style, without the knowledge and the sense which guided him in the

use of it, is powerfully evinced by the absurd and bombastic productions of his immediate successors and imitators.

But he that would excel must dare: only let an ardent desire for the discovery of truth and beauty be the guide; for that alone can conduct an artist through the labyrinth of research in safety.

The grand principle of design thus created by Michel Angelo, received the homage not only of Raffaelle, but also of all the great painters of the Florentine, Venetian, and Bolognese schools. Certainly at least, a simultaneous improvement of style arose in the Venetian school, such as we see it in some of the finest works of Titian, — the Peter Martyr, the David and Goliath, the Abraham and Isaac, and others. We find it displayed in the works of Tintoretto; but considerably and judiciously moderated in its flow, to suit the character of his subjects; and happily blended with the gentler beauties of antique form, which he most most assiduously studied. It was powerfully revived by the Caracci, with more careful attention to positive correctness than was always given by Michel Angelo; as we see in the Farnese Gallery. In their best scholar, Guido, it was controlled by a research after beauty; and when beauty and grace are the objects desired, then a certain degree of gentleness, and a

less exuberant flow of line is required; of which the general form of Raffaelle is an example.

In the school of Germany, it led to monstrous excess; which, reduced, formed the style of Rubens; and upheld by his glowing imagination has given us these admirable works which manifest so powerfully the value of design, or of drawing, as to its influence in the execution of a picture; and in the works of no painter is design made more available to that end than in his; unless perhaps it be found in the best pictures of Tintoretto.

After what I have said upon this subject, I know not how to conclude this lecture, better than by repeating a part of my preparatory address to you. I therein stated, in illustration of the general utility of the grand style, that it is the same principle of selection, of enlargement, and simplification in design, which leads us to prefer the landscapes of Titian, of Poussin, of Claude, and of Wilson; to those of Both and Berghem, of Hobbima or Ruysdael. In the pictures of Claude we see it most clearly. His forms are no less distinct from those ordinarily found in nature, than are the representations of the human figure found in the antique statues, or in the works of Michel Angelo; but are as select as theirs, and as fitly adapted to the purposes for which they are chosen.

The influence of style in design extending through the lower walks of art gives superiority, in the Dutch and Flemish schools, to the works of Metzu, Terbourg, and Jan Stein, over those of Ostade, Mieris, and Gerard Douw. So that, when I select for my theme the highest in the noblest class of art, you may each apply my remarks in well-regulated degrees to the improvement of your own immediate classes of subjects. In portraiture, it is well known to be a controlling principle with the best painters; and the world may well be assured of its truth, while possessed of the labours of Sir Joshua Reynolds; in which grandeur, grace, and truth, contend for the mastery.

The attainment of style inculcated in this lecture from the examples given to us by the older artists, naturally leads to the consideration of the best mode of attaining knowledge in painting, by studying pictures. I shall therefore add a few observations on that subject.

It is doubtless very delightful to indulge in the rapturous feelings, and the enthusiastic language, excited by the great and the admirable in art; and whilst it exhibits capability of comprehending its beauty, it seems, also, to promise the enjoyment of power to produce it.

But the capacity to separate truth from all that disguises it, and portray it for ourselves, is the invaluable gift of a few; whilst the native consciousness within us, of its existence, enabling us at once to acknowledge and enjoy it when displayed, is widely imparted to the mass of mankind. Hence it is a more common and generally found to be a more agreeable task, to indulge in the pleasurable sensations imparted by fine works of art, and far more easy to talk of them than to search out the latent principles whence the pleasure they afford is derived.

To learn, the fervour of enjoyment must subside, and calm reflection, the result of earnest enquiry, take place in our minds; we must bring reason to our aid, ere we can comprehend the mode by which the powerful or the pleasing effect that moved us has been produced. The actor feels not, whilst he studies his part, the passion which he intends to display. "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba!" He is thinking of the proper emphasis, the proper action, the proper turn of features for his adoption, to produce the semblance of the passion by which it may be supposed he is influenced; and all this necessary preoccupation of his mind excludes the passion itself.

Just so, the student in painting who aims at excellence will divest himself of the immediate

influence excited by his admiration of a work of art, and apply his mind to the consideration of those combinations of forms, or of colours, of actions, and of expressions, which have been productive of the emotion he feels; whether it arise from sentiment or from beauty, from the power of the art, or the skill of the artist. I speak for those, and they are not a few, who mistakenly seem to think when they feel themselves excited to enthusiastic fervour by a picture, and speak of it with corresponding energy and a glowing imagination, that they exhibit a knowledge of art, and manifest the proof of genius. It is but a step in advance! It is, indeed, the firm basis of the true connoisseur; a testimony of his capacity to feel justly the effect of a fine work. It may be sufficient for the critic, but it will never make a painter; and it is a fatal error to an artist, if he rest content with it: an error, by which many fair hopes have been destroyed; and by which talents, that might have produced admirable results, have been perverted and betrayed their possessor.

It was by the control of reason over enthusiasm that the art attained the perfection which has been exhibited to us; and it is that man only who so regulates his mind, that he can cast aside the warmer emotion, in just time for the more useful and ultimately more grateful

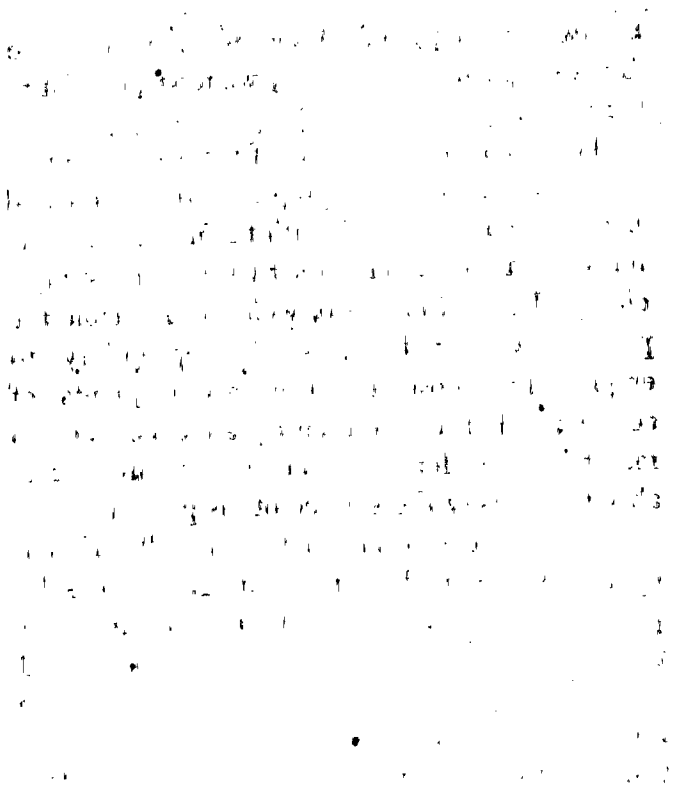
pleasure of enquiry, who, in turn, reaps the benefit of becoming able to excite it in others. It is perhaps to the mistaken notion in the world, that art is almost altogether the product of fervid feeling, unaided by sober judgment, that are owing many of the unsound opinions of art and artists, which have abounded, and do still abound, in the world.

Many will, I fear, deem these observations founded on a cold calculation. But it must be seen, that I do not exclude a capability of warm and enthusiastic sensation from the catalogue of the virtues of a painter; and if I thought that I should destroy, or weaken, the warmth of feeling in a youthful mind devoted to the art, I would not thus treat the subject. No, I proceed to say that he who feels it not, will never be an artist, can never attain a consciousness of that which renders the art estimable. He must enthusiastically feel, or he can never enjoy the beauties of art; he must enjoy them, or he can never endure the labours of practice necessary for the attainment of power to produce them; and he must practise laboriously, and reason calmly while he labours under the influence of his zeal, or his desire to become a great artist will be vain.

LECTURE VII.

ON COMPOSITION IN PAINTING.

1829.



LECTURE VII.

COMPOSITION.

GENTLEMEN,

FROM Invention, and Design which realises the forms supplied by invention, we next proceed to Composition.

This influential principle of the art of painting includes, not only the proper introduction and combination of figures, with the management of forms and characters relative to the subject chosen, but of those also, which will enable the painter, without losing sight of propriety, to employ the most beautiful arrangements of colours, and of chiaro-oscuro; alike efficient to maintain those forms and characters, and agreeably to diversify the surface of his picture.

Such combinations cannot be skilfully effected by a fortuitous mode of proceeding. Some solid principles must be adopted to guide an artist through such a labyrinth of difficulties, and enable him to produce a composition, effective for all his purposes, but void of evident artifice; the apparent result of a natural and perfect

vision of the original prototype. But so subtle is this degree of perfection in composition, and so difficult of attainment, that it is only by many essays, frequently imperfect, and inefficient, that a learner becomes acquainted with the nature of the difficulties that attend it. So true it is, that the real beauties of the art are unostentatious; and the more perfect any work of art is, the more easy of imitation does it appear to the unpractised.

Mr. Alison, in his Essay on Taste, has justly observed, that "if the fine arts are in reality arts of imitation, their principles must be sought in the subjects which they imitate." Nothing can be more self-evidently true. Art has not, nor can have, any other proper basis than nature; at once the source, the end, and test of art. Being imitative of natural effects, it must seek its regulator, in the principles upon which the operations of nature are presented to our view. It is mistaken and injurious art, under the affectation of style or some other vain pretence misleading the observer and confusing his understanding, which proceeds upon any other basis.

The evil which such a perverted and senseless employment of talent has caused, has led many to declaim against System in the practice of the art of painting as injurious to it. But that is just only when system is ill founded.

We cannot look at any refined work of art which effectively displays sentiment, and not perceive that the artist was actuated by some fixed principles, or system, in the composition and execution of it, as best fitted to answer his purpose. We see it in the statues of the Greeks, and in the remnants, imperfect as they are, of their paintings; and we cannot but believe the testimonies we gather from various sources, of its being the result of experience, the offspring of long cultivation alone.*

What is the foundation of refined art in painting but selection from among the most beautiful and most impressive forms and colours for the production of an intended effect? But selection cannot be performed without system. An artist must be conscious of what he requires, he must have some view of the highest and the best qualities of things, ere he can think of seeking, much less of representing them; and the thoughts they inspire, when he has methodised them, become his system; guide him in his observations throughout the works of nature, and direct him in the representation of them.

I touched slightly on this point, System, in my

* Sir Joshua Reynolds has borne this testimony of himself, that he had a habit of investigation, and a disposition to reduce all that he observed, and felt in his own mind, to method and system.

last lecture, as applicable to the practice of design; I now recur to it, as the most useful agent for that study of nature on which the beauty and the excellence of the art depends. Yet it must be recollected that the formation and possession of System in painting, even when justly formed, requires the utmost care in the application of it.

With the greatest painters, it emanated from nature, and to her always reverted. The injurious class of system is derived from art, is the system of schools; which, instead of referring to nature, would if possible guide her course: and looks back, not to her, as an instructor, but to preceding works of art. And that which has cast a doubt upon the utility of system, is not the want of truth in the opinion of its necessity; but of wisdom in the pursuit of it.

Hence that weakness which academies of art have been too justly accused of engendering, but of which we trust our own is free. Here, you are taught to regard no specific work or class of art, as your only or infallible guide, and are at liberty to follow the dictates of your own inclinations; and, studying all, to combine, if you can, the beauties of each. Hence, we have the advantage of seeing upon the walls of our exhibition rooms so extended a range of

subjects, and such diversified modes of treatment of them.

But there is danger in this very liberty, lest the indulgence should weaken the character of each branch of the art among us, from the want of an appropriate guiding principle. To entertain a just sense of this principle, this systematic mode of proceeding in historical painting, you must not only study pictures, but more especially consider the causes of the varied effects produced upon your minds by peculiar occurrences in nature. Are you sensible of beauty, whence (should be your enquiry) does the sensation arise? What are the peculiar forms or colours which contribute most to produce it? Does the awful, the terrific, the horrible, assail you, from what peculiarities in the circumstances before you are the sensations you experience derived? Does pity, does compassion, take possession of your minds, what are the external tokens of the distress or of the suffering which excites you? Each must have its peculiar character, each its distinguishing line of expression; and the greater the extreme of your sympathy, the more decided must be the peculiarity which causes it, and which separates the expression of each passion or feeling from the other.

All combinations of natural forms, or of natural colours, productive of powerful effects upon

us, and specific in their nature, must be capable of specific distinction; since of each there must be the extreme leading point; and if there be danger to the practice of the art in such a systematic consideration of its object, the delineation of the works of nature; it consists, not in the thing itself, but in a mistaken application of it. We may say, with Akenside, when speaking of style of expression in poetry; that,

> —— "like the unchanging sun,
> It clears and improves whate'er it shines upon;
> It gilds all objects, but it alters none."

System, then, in painting, and in the consideration of the objects upon which it is employed, is not only, not injurious, but necessary; and it is they only who have no system, who, blindly struggling with taste, till by accident they meet with that which will suit their purpose, never become strong in art; who never can, like Sir Joshua Reynolds and other able men, become stronger as they grow older; and that from the very force of a well-regulated principle of action in their professional labours; or, in other words, from system, framed as the knowledge of their wants increased.

There is no evil, but the greatest utility, derivable to the art of music, from the well-understood system of chords and discords in sounds;

and some composers apply it with natural pathos and powerful control over our feelings, and thus exhibits its value; while others, with more technical knowledge than judgment, misuse it by a rich but common-place exhibition of their acquirements, equally void of sense and sentiment.

Is the system on which they act the cause of excellence in the one and of error in the other? Or may we not rather say, that the one applies the system, following the just dictates of feeling, and of judgment; the other, the vague suggestions of fancy? I need not say which is the most worthy of estimation.

To produce fine composition of historical matter in painting, requires a considerable degree of such a systematic consideration of the natural causes of peculiar effects, as that of which I have spoken.

When an intelligent painter undertakes to portray an historical fact, his first object will undoubtedly be, to convey to the observer an impressive image of his subject, with its dependencies; as far as they can be conveyed, by a clear and enthusiastic appeal through the means of vision, to the common sense and feelings of mankind. But the artist of refined taste who is conscious of the power of his art, will not rest contented with so meagre an application of it, however

clear his representation of the subject may be. He will not only attempt to display the fact intelligibly, but he will seek for the means which art affords, and cultivated art requires, for its best illustration. The most beautiful, as well as the most intelligible composition will be his aim; that,

> —— "which heightens to his eye
> The bloom of nature, and before him turns
> The gayest, happiest, attitude of things;"
>
> AKENSIDE.

that which will attract an observer's attention, and excite his enthusiasm, as well as the approval of his understanding.

This is consistent with that nobleness of invention which we have seen realised in painting and in sculpture: from whence we know that there is an art of animating and dignifying the figure with intellectual grandeur, of impressing the appearance of philosophic wisdom, or of heroic virtue. But this can only be effected by him who enlarges the sphere of his understanding by variety of natural knowledge, and warms his imagination by the study of the best productions of ancient and modern poetry.

Composition implies order, arrangement; it poises and gives firmness to the figure supplied by invention, adjusts its degree of motion by concentrating or extending its sphere of action,

in relation to itself or in unison with others: combining the consideration of the space to be occupied, with that of the story, or the passion to be displayed, or the sentiment to be excited.

There are two kinds of composition in historical painting. One is the offspring of the sentiment or feeling inspired by the subject; and its aim is to illustrate that subject, in the clearest and the most engaging manner; but making its beauty subservient to its strength. The other, is merely technical, the interest it excites being dependent on the skill of the artist; the beauty of art, is the paramount object of it, and the subject is considered but as a vehicle for its display. The first, is the firm foundation on which rests the glory of the composition of the Florentine school at its most perfect period; the other, of the less stable charms of the school of Venice, after the time of Titian: it is that also of Parma, to a great degree, and frequently of the Bolognese school. Each sacrificed the principle of the other to attain its own end. They please by different means, and will be enjoyed in turn by those who search in the various schools of painting for the beauties of each; and each offends those who narrowly have resolved, either to be pleased with that alone which is beautiful to the eye, or with that which gratifies the mind, regardless of beauty.

As invention exhibits the genius of an artist, composition, with design, informs us of his taste.

The purest taste, and the most perfect, is doubtless that which presents us with truth displayed with sense, and beauty. But there is a common acceptation of that term taste, in which it is now best understood, which relates more immediately to the application of the principles of painting, than to nature; referring to a certain sense of beauty in controlling the use of the materials of the art, in form, in colour, and in chiaro-oscuro.

When this taste is indulged undirected by judgment, it leads to exaggeration in each department of art, for the purpose of producing the picturesque; and that class of composition is created which is entitled the ornamental. But those who prefer, like the lower Venetian masters, this mode of exciting interest, must be content with the uncertain and unsubstantial praise to which it is entitled. Uncertain, for it must depend upon an union of taste between the painter and the observer; which, if peculiar, can scarcely be very widely diffused: and unsubstantial, because it must always be associated with the fluctuating empire of fashion; and the inventive faculty of an artist, when employed in the service of fashion, is for ever liable to error. Truth and beauty, are stable and unchangeable;

fashion for ever varying; calling that beautiful or tasteful to-day, which, to-morrow, it may term trifling, extravagant, or common-place.

It must be the occupation, then, of those who desire to obtain the knowledge of that which is truly grand and impressive in art, and to practise under its influence, steadfastly to reject all allurements but those of truth; and be guided by that alone which really moves the mind to sympathy, which excites to the admiration of beauty, or touches with the emphasis of passion.

This can only be the case with those pictures whose authors have taken the guidance of a good understanding and a pure taste. They must ever have a strong hold on the mind of man, the principles of whose nature are unchangeable.

Here, then, we have the true basis of the most valuable kind of composition; that, which attaches itself to the subject to be represented.

If the invention of the painter have been employed to this good end in the discovery of materials for a picture, then the same judicious influence will control his enthusiasm in composing them; will instruct him to choose those only which his subject specifically demands, and reject all that is superfluous; and will direct him to place each figure, in the situation, as well as to give it the expression, befitting the portion of interest attached to it in the scene.

Afterwards, invention takes another course; calls the judgment more closely to its aid, and turns for support to those technical regulations of the art of painting by which beauty is produced, and expression rendered most forcible: and here taste, in its ordinary acceptation, becomes an important ally.

In this stage of the progress of painting, art becomes artifice, without degradation. Such artifice, a painter is obliged to employ: his ingenuity is for ever put to the test, to compensate for deficiencies, to curtail redundancies, to disguise unfavourable circumstances; to ameliorate, in short, all those inconveniences which may arise from the nature of his materials; and his whole occupation, when engaged on the surface of his picture, consists in displaying those materials most efficiently.

This is a portion of that system of art of which I have spoken; which directs him who aims at perfection, to press into his service the extreme influence of the privilege of selection for the amendment of form in itself, or in its combinations; rendering all forms subservient, under just control, to the purposes of his art. But I would observe, that he can never be esteemed a truly great artist, whose imagination will not furnish him, from the great storehouse of Nature and the excellent among the productions of art,

with such combinations as he may require, without violating the principles of either. He cannot be considered as duly qualified for the most exalted practice of the art of painting, who feels compelled to adopt falsehood for truth, however ingeniously he may be able to disguise it.

The soul of composition is expression; deriving its power from the sympathy it excites in the minds of others. It has recently been well said, by an anonymous writer, that "the feelings which exist in the poet, (he might have added, and the painter,) are those that exist, with more or less developement, in every human soul. The imagination, he adds, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being."

There are established principles in the nature of man, by which, unconscious of their influence his actions are controlled, both when alone or in communion with others, according to the circumstances which surround him and engage his attention. When many men act together under circumstances of a tranquil nature, or are merely observant of a fact which does not excite to warm emotions, but rather produces serious or solemn sensations; we see the sentiment appertaining to the scene displayed in the parallelism of their positions, and the simple and slight movements of their limbs. In conformity with

the principle thus established by nature, has that powerful and beautiful portrayer of human nature, Raffaelle, our purest guide when whatever relates to propriety is the theme; thus he has employed the influence of simple forms in his cartoon of the Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter, to produce solemnity, the natural effect of that scene. It is the same in his group of the Apostles in the Ananias, and also among the figures distributing and receiving alms; whilst he has resorted to the adverse system of angular forms and abrupt contrasts, to portray distress and convulsion in the dying man, and astonishment and dismay in the figures that immediately surround him. Again, the simple forms and parallelism of position producing the seriousness becoming those engaged in the intended sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, are disturbed only, by the varieties of form and the contrasts indicative of the commotion excited by the distress of St. Paul, and explanatory of the miracle he has performed.

The anomalous pictures of saints and angels surrounding and adoring the Virgin and Child, painted for holy altars, and intended to excite devotional feelings, were founded and constantly composed on this principle, until it was superseded by the rage for the picturesque: and you may see, in the magnificent work of that kind by

Rubens, painted to adorn the high altar of the church of St. Augustin at Antwerp, how totally the sentiment, the true basis of such pictures, was destroyed by the change. By the employment of rich and flowing lines, and many and strong contrasts, Rubens has deprived that picture of the solemnity which a combination of such persons should display. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his journey through Flanders, has placed it in unfavourable opposition, in point of sentiment, to a picture by Titian in the church of the Frari at Venice *, with many admirable remarks; and I will lay before you, for comparison with it, the picture by Raffaelle at Dresden, La Madonna del Sisto. You will at once see, that if the one be an assemblage of forms admirably calculated to display the power of the painter, and produce a rich and splendid scene; the other, no less manifests the power of his art, when judiciously applied, to excite devotional feelings.

If you compare, also, the simple grand forms of the Prophets and Sibyls by Michel Angelo, with the angular forms of the Evangelists by Domenichino, you will perceive the dignified power of the former from their simpler combinations; on which the mind undisturbedly dwells in deep emotion, till the sentiment intended be per-

* Over the altar of the family of Pisano.

fected. While, in the other, the eye finds no repose, and consequently, the mind derives no satisfactory or sympathetic emotion from them.

Omitting to act upon this principle, of order and dignified simplicity, in the group of the Disciples in the Transfiguration, it appears to me, that Raffaelle has not maintained the sentiment appertaining to their character, or of the scene in which they are engaged; but, it adds simplicity and consequent grandeur to the upper part. Again, what effectual power does the employment of contrast and angular forms present, in his picture of the Resurrection of the Saviour; expressive of all the astonishment and alarm, which so extraordinary an event must have excited!

I would also venture to remark upon another very important work, the Last Supper, by Lionardi da Vinci, that its great author has, perhaps, yielded too much to the fervour of excitation in the subject; and that its sacred, and solemn, and impressive character might have been enhanced, if less action among the Apostles, and consequently less of contrast, had been introduced in it.

It is, however, in the works of Tintoretto and the later members of the Venetian school, that we may find the most powerful illustration of the ill effects caused by neglect of the principle to

which I allude. Their serious subjects are overwhelmed in the force of contrasts, from their love of the picturesque. The same important subject, as that I have mentioned of the picture by L. da Vinci, when in the hands of Tintoretto in the Scuolo di S. Rocco, becomes grotesque, exhibits the irregularities of bacchanalian orgies; and the solemn and deeply impressive history of the resuscitation of Lazarus selected for another of the same series of pictures, is lost in the display of the materials the painter chose for its representation.

If, pursuing the same system of reasoning, we examine the influence of other natural circumstances as they act upon men, be they grave or gay, alluring or repulsive, calculated to impress terror or enchant with delight, the principles of composition required in treating them, will be found to arise from the actions which they generate, of the individuals excited by their influence.

What can be more appropriate, more duly springing from the nature of a subject, than the grand, and flowing, and graceful lines which characterise the composition by Rubens in the Luxembourg gallery, of the crowning of Mary of Medicis? What more descriptive of the violence and fury of a battle, than the angular forms and abrupt contrasts of the Battle of the Standard by Da Vinci; and of those skilful arrangements

which were adopted from it, or made in rivalry with it, in the splendid compositions of the hunting scenes of Rubens? or the bustle and vivacity produced by the infinite variety of contrasts, which almost intoxicate our sense of vision, in that vigorous and astonishing effort of his glowing pencil the Fall of the Damned, at Munich? or that other admirable picture so strong in contrast of subject, the Fête Flamande, now in the Louvre?

The historical portion of these lectures will have conveyed to your minds an idea of the growth of composition, from little better than apposition, or figures placed side by side, to perfection in variety of form, combined with grandeur and depth of parts. Such we see it, "in mazes intricate, involved, yet regular when most irregular they seem," in the works of the great masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; where we find the most extraordinary combinations of form effected with that unity, propriety, and perspicuity, which good composition requires.

It is also worthy of remark, while tracing this subject, that through the whole of the early periods of the art, conventional heads of certain characters, and conventional compositions of actions for certain figures, were frequently repeated unchanged in what related to grouping;

but amended, according to the growth of taste, in the form of the individual figures.

Thus, we find the arrangement of the upper part of the Transfiguration in an illuminated MS. as far back as the eleventh century, repeated by Giotto on the door of a wardrobe in the Santa Croce at Florence in the beginning of the fourteenth. That of the same portion of the School of Theology by Raffaelle, employed by Guido da Sienna in the thirteenth century, (as may be seen in a picture by him now in the museum at Sienna) was repeated by Fra Angelico da Fiesole, in the fourteenth, by Fra Bartolomeo in the cloister of the hospital at Florence in the fifteenth; and thence transplanted by Raffaelle to the Vatican, as the accepted mode of representing the Heaven of Heavens: a type sanctified by usage, and therefore, to be given without any alteration except in the actions of the individual figures. The action also of the Saviour adopted by Michel Angelo in his picture of the Last Judgment, which by many has been severely criticised and condemned, Mr. Fuseli amongst them, is the sanctioned product of the early periods; from which, probably, he did not feel himself at liberty to depart. It is to be seen in a picture of the Last Judgment by Lorenzetti, at Sienna; and in many subsequent pictures. There also is a picture of St. Peter in Prison, and on the side of it the

angel conducting him thence, treated precisely in the same manner as by Raffaelle in the Vatican; and we have the prototype of the class of composition he employed in the Parnassus and the School of Athens, in a work of Galaton, a Greek painter; who, according to Ælian, represented the later poets of his country listening to the strains of Homer.

Thus also, the clothing of most of the sacred and scriptural characters was employed conventionally through a great lapse of time. To this necessity we probably owe much of the continued formality of religious subjects, even to late periods. These bonds, however, were loosened in other subjects, as they became admitted within the pale of the art; and even the necessity incurred by the growth of taste, gave beauty to the simplicity of the early religious works; such as we see in the product of the taste and genius of Raffaelle.

In the formation of groups employed in historical or poetical display, well-founded composition, will, of course, scorn a servile dependence upon the rules of art. But its general form, created by the character of the subject and the necessities it imposes, being determined, the painter will then do well to take the geometric form most nearly allied to it, and make that form his regulator. Such a guide gives point to com-

position, and renders it more efficient, by the rare combination it displays of feeling, taste, and science.

We can scarcely doubt, that the best composers, from the Greeks downwards, were thus guided, both in their grouping and in their single figures; since their compositions are almost always found to partake of some geometric form; of which, however, the unlearned perceive only the effect, while the initiated artist comprehends the cause.

The triangle in varied directions, the cone and its sections, the circle and its segments, the square, the lozenge, and the parallelogram, all have assisted in the regulation of composition with varied powers. The basis of arrangement in the cartoon of the Death of Ananias is a circle, though perspective has reduced it to an oval; a semicircle, of which St. Paul is the centre, regulates the composition of the Preaching of that saint at Athens.

The pyramidal form reigns in various groups of those compositions; and was evidently the regulating principle of the Transfiguration.

With these instances before you, it will be unnecessary for me to give further illustrations on this point; you may apply these thoughts for yourselves, whenever you engage in the study and examination of fine works. But it

must always be recollected, that this adoption of scientific form defeats its own object, if left too apparent: and while the useful principle it affords is maintained in a general manner, an imitation of that variety of form, of action, and position of figure which nature so constantly dictates, must disguise and seclude it from the notice of the common observer.

Composition, when extensive, requires attention to the ground-plan of the scene of action. Hence perspective becomes of infinite importance in it, that each figure may have its proper station awarded to it with relation to others; and room for itself, in accordance with the character of its own action. Raffaelle, Rubens, Poussin, and indeed all the best composers, were admirably attentive to this important point.

It is likewise of absolute importance that the figures do not interfere with each other, that each be distinctly and intelligibly clear, however small be the portion of it which is seen; and that the whole act together in line and in form, to make the mass agreeable; as seen in that magic circle which surrounds St. Paul preaching at Athens: and, above all, that there be no uncertainty as to the principal object of the picture; but that it be made conspicuous, as the centre from which all emanates. This may be effected by various means; by form, by station,

by mass, by light, by dark; and by the subordinate parts evidently tending, and conducting the eye of the spectator, towards it.

In this respect Raffaelle has varied his plans, in the cartoons before you. In the Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter, the Saviour, the principal person, is alone, and near the side of the picture; but we are made sensible of his importance, not only by his being separate and by his commanding action, but by the submissive posture of St. Peter, advanced before the group of the disciples and connecting it with the figure of the Saviour; and by the combined actions of those disciples themselves, almost all directed towards their Lord. It is the same in the Miracle at Lystra, though not conveying so entire a sense of unity in the subject; while in the Elymas, where the subject conducted the painter to the same principle of composition, "cause and effect conjoined," so immediately strike our senses, that we do not hesitate a moment in comprehending all that is intended.

These are all compositions of form, and not dependent on any other principle of the art for their power over us, and thus skilfully conducted, display their purposes; nevertheless, as a general rule in composition, the effect is the most perfect, because the most acceptable to the eye, when the principal objects are so placed as

to become the centre of vision, as well as the centre of form; that is, when they have possession, as in the Ananias, of the most conspicuous place in the picture; which is in or near the central line.

That simplicity, regularity, and uniformity, to a certain degree, in balancing the groups and the sides of a picture, thus supporting the main object in the centre, is a source of grandeur in composition, is proved by many powerful productions of the art. In shorter terms, that the scheme most available for that particular purpose, is symmetry in the whole, with proportion and variety in the parts.

It is however to the fearless, yet skilful employment of variety in composition, caused by following the impulse given by the subject, that the pictures of Raffaelle owe that simple air of truth, that appearance of artlessness, which persuades us, as Mr. Fuseli has observed, "that his figures have been less composed by skill, than grouped by nature; and that the fact must have happened, as we see it represented."

We may justly apply to that great painter the sentiment of the language which Pope has so wisely written of Shakspeare. "The poetry of Shakspeare," he says, "was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an imitator, as an instrument of nature; and it is not so just to say, that he

speaks from her, as that she speaks through him. He hits that particular point, on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each motion depends."

Rarely, or never, do we find in the most studied works of Raffaelle, or in his most extended compositions, any admixture of heterogeneous matter, or of figures which appear introduced merely to fill a place, or compose a form; and when we contemplate his pictures, we find our attention drawn towards the principal object, wherever situated.

This proceeds from his invention and composition having acted upon each other to one end. As invention supplied the means, his taste in composition, excited by the same enthusiastic sense of propriety which produced those means, so arranged them as best to promote the object for which they were selected.

This indeed was effected by the early masters, but not with like variety, vivacity, interest, or beauty.

The vigour of genius, as a native power of the mind, seems not capable of much enlargement, though study may extend its sphere of action; but taste is a much more improvable quality. The power of the genius of Giotto, I conceive to have been scarce less than that of Raffaelle; and as far as the examples he enjoyed

to guide his taste, he in that point also appears nearly to approach him. The feeling which he exhibited, the emanation of his genius, was as full, and was as directly applied; but the art of painting had attained an immense store of materials for its display, ere Raffaelle arose to employ and improve them; and to exhibit, by their help in great measure, the vast extent of both his genius and his taste.

The composition of Michel Angelo is of a bolder character; more fitted to convey poetic interest, but less calculated for historical purposes. His perfect knowledge of the human figure, and of perspective, enabled him to foreshorten both the body and the limbs, in every direction, with the greatest ease and truth, and by those means to produce his grand cartoon for the great hall at Florence, and those struggling groups of men and fiends, in his picture of the Last Judgment, which fill us with astonishment and terror.

But it may perhaps be observed, that his composition is generally of a character more completely allied to sculpture than to painting; that it is employed principally on groups of figures, and not extending through the minor points of a picture; and it does not therefore yield sufficient variety, where the picturesque is demanded.

Having already acknowledged the great supe-

riority of these two extraordinary men; of the one in grandeur and dignity of design, and poetical composition of the human figure, and of the other in pure historical composition, I have presented them to you as the most proper objects for your study: yet, as the full scope of the art is not, nor ought to be, limited, but has, by other men and in other countries, added strength to its agency, by uniting various qualities unknown to them, and necessary for you to be acquainted with, I shall no longer dwell on their productions. I now, therefore, turn to those who, having employed their thoughts on other points necessary for complete pictures, have by that means rendered their works, if not more grateful to the mind, more fascinating to the eye.

The composition of Rubens, founded originally upon the wild extravagancies of the German school, the works of Goltzius, of Spranger, and others; and afterwards modified from observation of the great works of the masters of the Italian schools; possesses a character entirely his own.

The copy, at the lower end of the room *, of the Descent from the Cross by Rubens, presents to you the composition of one of the purest and most beautiful of his sacred works. Full of the

* In the Royal Academy.

enthusiasm of his genius, it embraces all that is requisite for a picture in his own style; though in painting it he has chastened the exuberance of that style, while he maintained its richness. Compare it with the Raising of the Cross; how more agreeable its flow of line! and less strong its contrasts! how much less gross its forms! how far less violent its expressions! But its variety, its fulness, its effective unity productive of one end, (I speak now only of its composition,) renders it one of the great master-pieces of the art. Still, notwithstanding all its wonderful power, there is no denying that the richness of its effect upon the eye, absorbs too large a portion of the attention due to so solemn and overwhelming a subject: a lower and a lurid tone of illumination, might, perhaps, have overpowered the effect of the rich flow of line and colour which it presents, and strengthened its due influence on the mind.

But it is in the bacchanalian scenes of revelry, and in the battle-pieces painted by Rubens; in his huntings, his merry-makings, his scenes of courtly and of common life, that we more fully recognise the skill and propriety of his compositions; and no less, indeed, in the tremendous overwhelming of the Rebel Host of Heaven; and yet, still more, in the greatest of all his works, the Fall of the Damned; where

you may find variety, depth, intricacy, and intelligence of composition, fitted to receive the most powerful and beautiful chiaro-oscuro and colour.

In the paintings of Coreggio we find an application of composition, also very different in every respect from that of Raffaelle or Michel Angelo; which, not losing sight of the subject, still is more directly productive of the picturesque, or of agreeable and beautiful diversities of light and dark; the fittest vehicles for a successful exhibition of the charms of colouring. Because it thus becomes subservient to the purposes of a lower employment of the art, and is rather adapted to exhibit the beauty resident in itself than to convey great pathos, or to relate a fact, its author has been ranked by competent authority as a machinist, or one who employs the art for itself alone. But it must be confessed that he was the greatest of all those who have merited that appellation; and some of the figures most perfect in expression and most graceful in action, which have been produced by the art of painting, are found in the pictures of Coreggio. Such is that of the Magdalen in his picture at Parma, of St. Jerome showing his translation of the Bible to the infant Saviour; and of the little picture of the Magdalen reading, at Dresden. His principal object, as far as relates to composition, appears to have been the attainment of breadth,

as necessary to that union of colour and of chiaro-oscuro, which had till then been unknown upon a scale at all comparable with his. Figures thrown into positions relative to their illumination, which afforded broad lights and shades, and extended and flowing lines of drapery, were his agents; causing large divisions of spaces and great masses of shade, supporting and beautifully relieving equally extended masses of light, and generally producing agreeable and graceful forms.

The composition of Titian, in his best works, is of a far more true and dignified character. We shall look in vain for a composition more completely uniting truth and grandeur of line and of form in picturesque effect, than his large picture of the Death of St. Peter Martyr; or that of David with the Dead Body of Goliath; the latter conveying, most beautifully and poetically, the sentiment of grateful piety which animated the breast of the youthful hero.

Tintoretto, again, presents us with another class of composition, fitted for a purpose different from either, or rather more immediately fitted for his own; which was, an ostentatious display of the power of art. It seems to have been employed by him merely to fill the space he had to occupy, agreeably; and in that technical portion of the art his works are master-pieces of instruction. But whether the neglect of propriety, or

the want of common sense, which they too frequently exhibit, predominate, I will not take upon me to decide.

From the works of these great artists, combined with all they could abstract of the style of the mighty master, Michel Angelo, the Caracci formed their principles of design and composition. By this union they exhibited their skill in the technicalities of the art; in arrangement of forms for the production of variety and depth of composition, in the art of giving relief to their figures by contrivances of light and shade; and for these things more particularly I recommend their works to your study.

I might refer you, for examples of the main points of skilful composition, to the works of other able painters, but it would be only to exemplify the same principles; and the time allotted to these lectures is too short to permit of it.

Thus far I have treated of the principal features of composition, requiring the purest efforts of enthusiasm and of genius! The secondary, and the more subordinate portions of it, present a different theme for observation. They arise from considerations of a nature different from those on which the first are founded, and their introduction serves to a different end.

I have said that the refined and cultivated

painter will not be content with displaying his subject intelligibly, but will also seek for the means his art affords, and good art requires, of rendering it attractive. To this purpose, the technical employment of composition in the subordinate parts is directed; not only to strengthen the force of action in the figures, but likewise to adjust and regulate the quantities or proportions of forms and of spaces throughout the surface employed; to improve the general form of grouping in the parts, and in the whole; provide the grounds of relief for the principal objects, and present proper surfaces for expanse of light and shade, and colour.

One main point in the perfection of composition relative to form, technically speaking, and without reference to subject, consists in that proportional division of the surface employed, which at once presents to the eye an agreeable combination of forms and spaces. "Proportioned quantities," says Lomazzo, "is the matter of painting; and form is the regulator of those quantities; and it extends throughout the whole surface of a picture."

Such is the language of an author, who, living at a time when the art was highly cultivated and employed, must have received his tenets from the best authorities. What I mean by proportional quantities, or divisions of the surface, will

be easily comprehended in its principle, though there may doubts arise in many minds as to the practical application of it. There are, however, some points upon which all agree; such as, the impropriety of having many equal parts, or parts equal in quantity, or many similar forms; or of having the forms of diverse parts so range with each other, that they may not easily be separated. On such points, there can be no doubt: experience has taught us how much delight our eyes receive from variety and distinctness of form; but the exact proportion of parts which is requisite is not so easily determinable.

The more I have considered the subject, and the more I find myself compelled by practice, the more I am satisfied that its basis is determinable by numbers. I say, the basis upon which it rests; for I conceive, that the nearer an artist approaches to some arithmetical proportion in, or between, his masses, or his forms and spaces, among themselves, or each to the other, the more acceptable will his compositions be; not only to those initiated in the art, but also to the common observer.

There is no one having much practice in painting, who can be insensible to the pleasing sensations arising in his mind as he corrects his labours, as proportion is improved, or as colours are better arranged; not only in proportions of

figures, over which there may be some control through preconceived notions or feelings; but in the proportional parts of his picture generally and combinedly, to which no previous considerations lead: and which seem to be derived only from their physical effect upon the eye. And when it is done, so as to please the eye of an ingenious artist, and rendered as complete as his taste will guide him; he will find, if he examine his work, that he has brought the parts of his composition nearer to a given ratio, in their proportions with each other.* Such mechanical

* If any are inclined to think that such a systematic mode of producing the beautiful in composition, is derogatory to the free exercise of the painter's imagination, and limiting within narrow bounds the employment of his genius; let them recollect the immense capability of extent in such proportional combinations. Ample scope exists for the exercise of taste, both in selection, and union; and it may easily be perceived that the limitation the principle implies, is far out of reach of the utmost powers of fancy. Good music is not easily producible, because musical combinations are exactly understood, and mathematically demonstrated. As in music, so also in painting, there must be taste to select, taste to arrange and to combine, as well as knowledge and judgment; or beautiful combinations will never be formed on any extensive or perfect scale: and be the mystery of the beautiful in design solved ever so perfectly, and demonstrated, as that of music is, to a certain degree; the taste to employ the system effectually, will be still rarely displayed, unless the nature of man be changed.

Besides, it may not be always necessary to keep the princi-

modes of producing the beautiful in composition, I know, are not the offspring of feeling, but the product of experience. They do not aid sentiment, they do not elevate to the pathetic; they appertain to the mere technicalities of the art of painting. The most perfect praise they merit, and the highest benefit they can confer, is, that, by the judicious application of them, they render a work, which possesses the higher and more estimable qualities, more grateful to the eye, and consequently more attractive to an observer: and pictures fraught with excellence of the highest kind, wanting in these useful principles of composition, are not unfrequently overlooked.

This also must be added, to excite caution in the use of them,— that, in the lower periods of the art in Italy and in France, great evil arose from too great reliance being placed upon an excessive application of them; when artifice, at-

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ple precisely in view, and to invent under its immediate control. A mind well instructed, will frequently work without immediate reference to it; as we speak without reference to the rules of grammar, but rather under the general influence which the knowledge of them has excited within us. It is dangerous to trust too far to the indulgence of fancy; and those who do so, may find occasion to regret that they have not sometimes recollected the original foundation upon which their labours were begun.

tempting to fill the void of art, usurped the station of feeling: of which the ingenious works of Pietro Cortona, and many other machinists, are sufficient proofs.

For the arrangement in position of subordinate parts, our venerable President of the Royal Academy, Mr. West, used to observe, (and he undoubtedly was great authority upon this subject,) that continuity was the governing principle; continuity of form, continuity of light and dark, and continuity of colour. By this he meant, that, unless for some specific purpose, no form, or light, or dark, or colour, should suddenly cease to appear; but have evident relation to some other, which, if not absolutely continuing it, might lead the eye gradually from it: a principle he not only taught, but admirably exemplified in his pictures.

You may see another important principle of composition perfectly illustrated in the Death of Ananias; for I again recur, for illustration, to these fine works which are so fortunately around us; I allude to the combination of lines for the production of beauty in the whole. In that composition, the forms of the dying man are allied to those of the figures on each side of him; those in front being beautifully varied by degrees, till, as they become distant from him in the group, they are lost in the almost upright lines of the

man and woman receiving alms; who, with the two Apostles distributing those alms, complete the pyramidal shape of that group. On the other side of the picture, behind Ananias, the two figures bending over him terminate, with abrupt contrast, their union with the remainder of that group; thereby exhibiting powerfully, the momentary character of the subject; and also the utility of occasional violations of a general rule, when expression demands it. Yet the lover of grace and beauty, has not left entire abruptness even there; for the angular forms of the man with extended arms, are repeated in the figure of Sapphira.

However true it be, that the natural impulse of the subject may have led to this arrangement; it was composition, and that the most artful, which gave it such refinement and such union in the parts.

I might extend these remarks through the works of all the best composers, and particularly in those of Rubens, but it is not requisite: one example may serve to elicit in your minds a sense of the necessity and utility of this important principle; and you can examine for yourselves the mode in which it is applied by the best and the greatest masters, in the numerous prints provided for your instruction in the library of the Academy.

It is by the ingenious management of this spirit of continuity, and of union, with occasional contrasts for the more fully attracting the eye to the most beautiful, or the most impressive forms, that backgrounds must be adjusted. The chief object of the painter, therefore, while composing backgrounds, ought to be, to find such materials as will, in form, combine, or contrast, with the principal object; producing masses, with its lights and shades, to relieve the figure in the most agreeable manner, and at the same time connect it with its ground. The difficulty of this portion of our art is acknowledged by all. The painter has comparatively little guidance from nature in conducting it: imagination and taste, a sense of the requisites of art, to aid sentiment, and to produce grace and beauty, are its basis. Hence it has been so often, even with the best, the great point of failure: and very many are the compositions of figures, beautiful in line, and interesting in sentiment, which are deprived of the attention due to them, for want of correspondent beauty in the forms and colours of the backgrounds surrounding them.*

* For the illustration of this point, the employment of drapery has been constantly resorted to by the best composers. The divisions of its folds, and the direction of lines

What those shapes which best produce beauty, grace, or grandeur should be, taste must decide; for no rules can reach the varieties which are required under different circumstances; sometimes for contrast, at others for union; now to relieve, now to absorb the outline of the figure, or its lights and shades; to produce extension of light, or to compress it, according to the nature or quality of the subject.

The most effective pictures, have been those where the least matter contends with the principal objects, and wherein the forms which divide the portion of the surface unoccupied by the figures, produce agreeable shapes. This creates style in composition, or, the application of that principle of simplifying and enlarging form which is employed in design. Or it might be said, that style in design compels an artist to produce style in composition; from the mere necessity it induces, of supporting its own character. If figures are drawn in a grand style,

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in them, are instruments of great power to strengthen and give activity to the motion of figures, as well as to produce variety and continuity of line and form, and add beauty. That subtle and mysterious principle, beauty! whose influence all acknowledge, but whose elements few can develope! whose secret source is hidden from common gaze, though its blandishments, when displayed, captivate the most unlearned!

the painter will not be content with the accompanyment of poor and insipid shapes around them. Their incongruity will be too apparent, and he will not rest contented with such disagreement in the parts, producing a want of unity in the whole. Such simple modes of relief were employed, if we may credit the reports of authors, by the Greek painters; such also are those of Michel Angelo, those of the best period of Raffaelle, of Titian, and of Corregio, and are certainly most efficient in historical composition.

LECTURE VIII.

ON COLOURING.

1829.

LECTURE VIII.

ON COLOURING.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN by design and composition, the forms of human figures or of varied objects are produced and arranged for the purposes of painting, there is still wanting light and shade and colour, to render perfect the imitation of natural objects and effects, and the entire display of the power of the art.

As light and shade forms so important a part of Chiaro-oscuro, I shall reserve the discussion of it, till I treat of that important principle of painting, which I intend to do in my next Lecture; and proceed now, to consider the theory and practice of colouring.

This beautiful and delightful quality in pictures, in which, (so engaging are its charms,) is frequently thought to consist almost all the beauty and power of the art of painting, is in fact of less importance than design or chiaro-oscuro, and can effect little without them;

whilst they are able to elicit great emotion in the mind independent of colour; as we find when regarding prints and drawings. Yet such are its fascinations, that the delight it affords often allures the gravest minds; and withdraws the attention of artists from the study of more important matter. Whilst thus, however, I speak of colouring, I must add, that much, in my opinion, has been said and written of it, undervaluing its share in the production of expression or of sentiment, which is not well founded; except as it relates to the indiscriminate use of fine colours. But no one who understands fine colouring, regards it as dependent upon fine colours; they are much more frequently adverse to it. When colours are judiciously selected and applied, they render important assistance to the effect of design; not only giving the appearance of reality and life to its productions, but also, adding beauty; and in many cases, increasing expression. Indeed, there are many things essentially requisite to produce sentiment in a picture, almost entirely dependent upon it.

Through what other medium, can the glow of health, or the languor of sickness, be so well expressed? The beauty of the atmosphere, the dawn of the morning, the splendour of the evening, the sober character of twilight and the

gloom of night, each powerfully eliciting peculiar feelings in our minds, can by no other means be truly conveyed to our perceptions: and the beauty of flowers, the grace and the ornament of the earth, owe almost all their influence to colour.

It is not, however, these natural circumstances or objects alone, which require a judicious application of colours; appropriate tone and character of colouring appertain to each class of subject drawn from history, or from fancy; from the gayest to the most impressive. To represent the crucifixion of the Saviour with gay prismatic colours, would be absurd; as it would also be to give dull unengaging hues to the fête champêtre; the first, being naturally productive, in our minds, of the most serious, as the other, of the most pleasing sensations: but by the adoption of appropriate hues and tones of colour, the peculiar mental gratification which the representation of each affords us, by design, or drawing, may be increased. Thus employed, colouring becomes (whatever the lovers of the severe in Italian art may say of it,) a very important object for the study of the painter.

Colouring, is naturally divided into its theory, and its practice. I shall first treat of its theory.

The utmost strength of the painter's pallet consists in colours termed light, or dark, warm, or

cold; each of these classes being capable of various modifications as to strength or weakness, from the deepest tone to the brightest and to the most faint, which the admixture of white can produce. To this range of colours must be added, the extremes of white and black: and by the various combinations of which these simple materials are capable, both in unison and in contrast, are produced enchanting works, exciting within us sensations similar to those which we derive from the scenes of real life.

The principles of colouring, are the rules by which these combinations are best regulated, for the production of the desired effects; and have been collected partly, from considerations of the theory of the influence of colours upon our vision; and partly, from the experience of able painters, and the examples they have left to us.

Colouring, as applied by the painter, extends its influence through all the parts of a picture; alike in the shades, where none of the prismatic colours can exist, as in the lights which generate those colours. To him, therefore, the whole surface of every picture, however illumined, is colour; that of the shade producing the half tint throughout a picture, being equally, if not more important, than the hues of the prismatic colours themselves.

The imitation of the local, or real colour of an

object, presents no difficulty for him to contend with. The struggle he has to maintain, is principally with that colour as it recedes from light and descends to shade; assuming in its progress many hues of diminished lustre, which vary with surrounding circumstances.

While I endeavour to explain to you my view of the theoretical principles of colouring in painting, I entreat you to confine your attention, as much as possible, to colours alone, independent of form. The shortest, and most efficient mode of learning any thing well, is by reducing it in the first place to its component parts, independent of its effects; and when those parts are understood, combinations of them may be made with comparative ease and security.

A considerable degree of difficulty arises in the discussion of this subject, from the want of a clear and distinct application of the terms we commonly employ when speaking of it. Hue, and tone, and tint, are often confounded; and contrast, is employed to signify, not only two colours placed together which have no affinity, or an imperfect degree of it, and consequently produce discordant effects upon the eye; but also, those appositions of colours which are the source of harmony; and produce an agreeable sensation to the eye, when placed beside each other.

It would render the matter much more clear to us, if, confining the word contrast to its strictest sense, we applied it only to the apposition of discordant colours; and termed the other varieties harmonies, or concords, to borrow another term from music. As to the word hue, I would confine it to the signification of the peculiar quality of each colour; that which distinguishes one from another; as red from blue, and blue from yellow, &c., throughout all their varieties and combinations. By tint, I mean the degrees of gradation of any one colour, from its extreme degree of intensity, to its faintest: and tone, I would attach only, to the effect produced by the degree and colour of the illumination, and the shadows it produces; and as this nomenclature suits my purpose, I shall therefore employ it.

Though colouring be multifarious in its qualities, extensive in its unions and effects, and difficult in its application, yet the principles on which it chiefly depends are simple.

If we take a round object, and expose it to a direct ray of light, having placed it out of the reach of reflection from the atmosphere, or any illumined body; we shall find its surface presenting to our view three points relative to colour. Its actual or proper colour, where the

light falls upon it; its shade where deprived of light; and the intermediate portion of it, which constitutes, in the language of the painter, its half tint; and which becomes gradually deprived of colour as it approaches to the deeper shadow.

Light, then, is the cause of colour; and a regulation of nature hitherto inexplicable to us; giving to different bodies the power of separating the component parts of the rays of light, and reflecting to our eyes some peculiar portions of them only; absorbing, or at least not reflecting the others, is the cause of the rich variety of hues we see around us.

Hence it follows, that the more fully illumined any coloured body may be by the common light of day, the more vividly will its colour be exhibited; and, on the reverse, the less the degree of illumination it receives, the more faint or dull will be the power of its colour; till at length, where no ray of light can fall upon its surface, it will be deprived of its colour entirely, and become black.

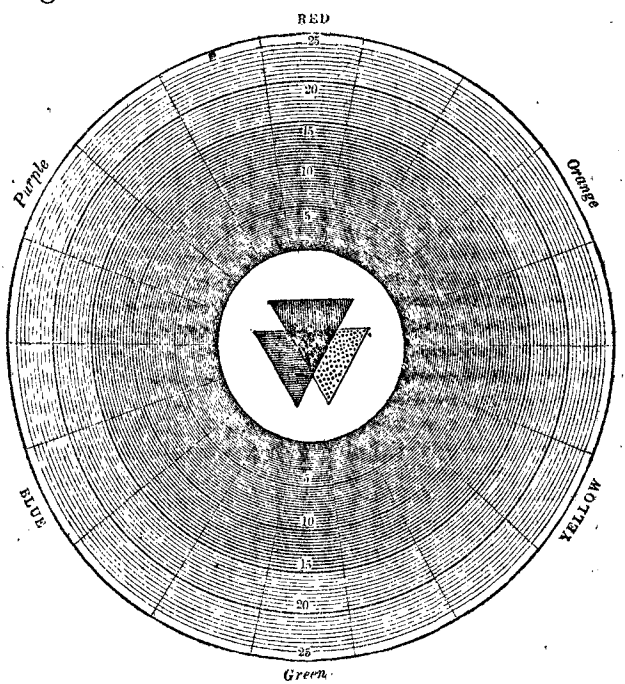
If, however, the coloured body be exposed to the intense light of the sun's direct ray, there is then formed another point for the consideration of the painter; which is, that in that portion of the plane of the coloured surface, which lies, with respect to the eye, at an angle

equal to that at which the rays of the sun descend upon the body, at that point, which is the seat of what we term the high light, there is reflected a certain quantity of the perfect light of the sun, or white; which destroys the colour in proportion to its own degree of intensity, by rendering it whiter than the general actual hue surrounding this bright light. This is rendered intelligible by referring to half-polished substances, as silk, or satin, but it takes place more or less in all.

But for the present, I wish you to dismiss this consideration from your minds, and revert to the first proposition; viz. that coloured substances obtain their hues from light, and lose them when deprived of it. Connect this proposition with another, viz. that shade, abstractedly considered, is always alike in tone; and you will then perceive, that the same tone of darkness, whatever be its degree, pervades all colours as they recede from light, to their complete union and total loss in shadow.

We may arrive at the same conclusion by a more technical mode of proceeding; and, for the purpose of explaining it, I lay before you the ingenious diagram given in a work published many years ago, by Moses Harris, under the title of "The Natural System of Colours." In the circular portion of his diagram, the pris-

matic colours, red, blue, and yellow, are united, consonant with the system of the rainbow, by orange, green, and purple; and all are graduated from the centre outwards, that is, from their utmost intensity, to the faintest tint approaching to white; and those tints are marked by a scale of strength, say twenty-five; supposing the five marked circular spaces to contain five degrees each.



By the central part of the diagram it appears, very clearly, that the union of the three primi-

tive colours (as he well terms them), red, blue, and yellow, in the pigments we employ, is productive of black; or a hue in which there is a total privation of all colour, and which therefore assumes the perfect character of shade.*

Now, if the union of the three primitive colours in their utmost degree of intensity be productive of perfect shade; it must be apparent, that their union in fainter but equal degrees of tint must be productive of the same negative colour, or tone; in a degree consonant to that of the tints of the colours employed: proving that which I before stated; viz. that all shade, in every degree, is alike in tone; and will produce the like effect on every coloured object subjected to it.

These two points then, truth of imitation of an actual colour, and unity of shade, I conceive to be the firm, though simple basis of true colouring in its primitive purity and simplicity; that is, when considered without regard to reflections. And yet operating even then, when reflections are admitted; for reflection, being light transmitted through another medium, but produces another colour upon the surface of the body where it reaches; and its gradations to the

* In curious contradistinction to the effect of aerial prismatic colours, the production of their union being white light! Nevertheless, in one point they agree, viz. that each is a negation of colour.

shadowed parts where it cannot reach, are subject to the same law.

Thus much for the consideration of any single colour, and its varieties, in union with shade. Our next object is, the union of the different colours with each other. It appears from numberless observations, that the human eye is so constituted with regard to colour, that though it derives pleasure from viewing each of the three primary colours alone, yet, if two of them are introduced to its view together, it then requires for its entire gratification the presence of the third also; and that want causes a physical sensation in the eye itself, which without mental agency, and in a manner unknown to us, produces the third.

For, let those two colours be united, and the compound colour formed by their union be exposed to the eye for a time, and then suddenly removed from before it; the form of the figure in which the compound colour was exhibited, will remain present to the view, but tinged of the colour omitted. That is, if the compound be purple, the spectrum will be yellow; if orange, blue; and if green, red; and even while the original colours are singly before the eyes, if regarded very attentively, each of them will be seen surrounded by the compound of the other two.

This points out, I conceive, the physical source of that pleasure which we derive from well-arranged colouring, and of those sensations, of gratification or of dissatisfaction, which must have been frequently experienced by every painter as he produced, or neglected, the requisite unions of colours. But whether I have assigned the real cause of it, or no, the fact is certain, that there are sensations of pleasure and of displeasure arising to our sense of vision, accordingly as colours are arranged or assorted.

We universally acknowledge great delight in regarding the rainbow: in the order or succession of its colours, as well as in their delicate and even imperceptible degrees of union; and no one has yet discovered an arrangement of them, more gratifying to our eyes, or to our understanding.

When the three primary colours are placed before us, our eyes accept the vision with a certain degree of pleasure: but they are most gratified when the intermediate colours are properly introduced, and the whole scale of the colours which constitute a ray of light is presented to them.

This arrangement, then, seems the most proper for adoption by the painter, as producing the most pleasing concord of colours; and we

may safely conclude, therefore, that such an arrangement of colours is the best adapted to our vision, and produces just that order, which is most acceptable to our eyes.

In this we have one principle of harmony in colouring, the harmony of arrangement. It may, perhaps, be said that this is rather more accordant with melody in music than with harmony; still it enters into those combinations for which, in colouring, we have no other name than harmony. Consonance, or harmony of hue, consists in those colours being brought together, which, though they may not be placed exactly in the regular order seen in the rainbow, or in the chromatic scale, yet act in accordance with each other upon the eye, and produce no uneasy sensation within it; but rather afford it pleasure.

There are two gradations in this portion of harmony of colouring. There is, first, as I have just said, a certain degree of accordance between the three primary colours, when arranged beside each other. But, secondly, a more perfect accord ensues, when any two of them are united, and the compound placed beside the third; both evidently depending upon the relation they bear to the prismatic colours in a ray of light.

The experiment I have before mentioned, showing the colours assumed by ocular spectra, when other colours are removed from before the

eye, proves, I think, this point satisfactorily. It is to the eye that colours address their power, and it may fairly be assumed that whatever colour is produced by the eye during the presence of another colour, but seen most clearly when that first presented to it is removed, must have been required by it to perfect its pleasure; and therefore, that such colour must be the harmonising one with the original colour, or that which forms an union with the other agreeable to the eye.

This we find accordant with experience. The primitive colour which harmonises best with purple is yellow; with green, red, with orange, blue. And again, that these are the colours which most perfectly associate, is proved, it appears to me, by their union in any degree of tint, producing a negative colour; and in their extreme intensity, black; which the union of no two other colours will do, except such compounds as have prismatic relations similar to theirs.

Another point requisite to produce harmony of hue, is, that the colours employed to produce it be of the same degree of strength in the scale. To explain this, I will refer to Mr. Harris's diagram.

Suppose we take a red at the fifth degree of intensity, and a green at the twentieth, or a

purple at its extreme degree of power, and a yellow at the fifteenth; it will not require much argument to prove their want of perfect accordance; but if you take either of these unions of harmonising colours at the same degree, say the tenth or the fifteenth, the eye accepts their union as agreeable.

I have thus endeavoured to explain to you the nature of the second principle of harmony in painting; there is still a third wanting to render it complete. That is, unity of tone, produced by the colours being all wrought under the influence of the same illumination; by which I mean, a light equal in its degree of intensity, and of hue.

On these three points then, depends that agreeable accordance of effect in the colouring of a picture, which we term harmony, viz. in the order of their arrangement, the employment of those accordant in their nature, that is, equal in their scale of hue or of tint, and their being seen under a like degree of illumination; unity of shade being implied of course.

I still speak without reference to reflections, feeling it to be very desirable for the perfect understanding of so subtle a question, that it be reduced in the first instance to as simple a proposition as possible. The next point for consideration upon this subject, is contrast of colour.

A principle, in my view of it opposed to harmony, but creative of richness and vivacity in the effect of a picture; and without which the monotony of harmony, if I may so speak, would be dull.

Contrast in its proper etymological acceptation, signifies opposition, or discordancy among things; and in that sense I prefer employing it, and confining it specifically to those oppositions of colours which are discordant to the eye. As now commonly employed relative to colouring, it has no specific meaning, except, as another term for variety; for we speak of pleasing and displeasing contrasts of colours, instead of displeasing contrasts, and pleasing unions, or harmonies; which is the natural course of terms.

If you will consent to this novel mode of considering contrasts, I think it will make our course more clear; and that is the only degree of consequence I attach to it.

I have already spoken of the colours whose effects upon the eye unite agreeably, and when placed beside each other, produce harmony; as yellow and purple, blue and orange, red and green, in equal degrees of the scale throughout all their varieties; and you will find in the diagram of Mr. Harris all those colours which thus unite, stand opposite each other in the circular

portion of it, and therefore have been mis-called contrasts.

There remains for the real and effectual contrasts, all those colours which do not accord, and which will not, when any two of them are compounded, produce the true negative tint.

The colours most strongly contrasting with each other, are any two of the three primitives, or those which stand triangular-wise in the diagram, as red, and blue, &c. As they not only have distinct qualities, but also, have no point of union, except for the production of other colours, and when presented to the eye together, they produce an uneasy sensation within it. It is the same with orange and purple, or orange and green*, though the contrasts they form to each other, are less powerful than those of any two of the primary colours; and all further compounds of them, partake less and less of that character. The contrasts thus formed, will be found consonant in their effect, throughout every degree of the scale.

I have thus endeavoured to explain to you my ideas of the principles whereon depend the means productive of good colouring, when employed by the man of genius. Those means are, truth,

* There being too large a portion of yellow in combination with the red and the blue employed, to produce the effect of a perfect ray of light.

in imitation of the actual hues of the objects to be represented; unity in their shade, and consequently in their half tint; harmony of arrangement and of hue, and I now introduce contrast and reflection to enrich and invigorate them. These regulations govern throughout every portion of the scale of colours, from their faintest to their deepest tint, from the degree employed in the sky and the most distant parts of a landscape, to those employed on its foreground; and to the still stronger colours to which the portrait or the historical painter resorts; or the more directly primitive hues, by which are represented the choicest productions of the garden.

To a certain length then in the order of proceeding in what relates to colouring, science thus conducts us; and if the science be founded upon the unchangeable principles of nature, its dictates must be obeyed. We cannot trifle with the dictates of nature, with impunity: but the painter may learn from her endless varieties of circumstance, or of accident, to adorn his imitations of the ordinary products of her laws, by the aid of those varieties; selecting those most fit for his purpose, and most agreeable to his taste; and thus like the poet, "he may accommodate the shews of things, to the desires of the mind."

There still remains free for his unbiassed exertions, that portion of the ingenious and delightful qualities of his art, which science unaided by taste, can never attain; and without which, neither would the art itself be worthy of the title universally bestowed upon it, of a liberal art; nor its most successful professors, to be considered as men of superior genius.

The painter, still has absolute control over many essential points in colouring. What scientific principle can guide him in his choice of the hue of colours most appropriate to his subject; or regulate the degree or the colour of illumination productive of the general tone; or the quantum of reflection best calculated to give the requisite degree of warmth to the shadows, and add richness to the mass; or direct him to use the harmonies of colour, or to employ the contrasts, or any, of all the intermediate degrees of union; or in the slightest degree aid him in these particulars? None! These things are all subject to his will, to his judgment, to his taste; and these are they which display feeling, which impart sentiment, which mark the man, and dignify the art! Science useful as it is in other respects, here fails to assist him; but when imagination and taste have supplied him with materials, and judgment has sanctioned the choice

of them, science then becomes a useful aid for their adjustment.

I trust I have said enough to convince you, that the general theoretical principles of colouring are simple, and may without much difficulty be comprehended. But the practical employment of colours, the application of them in painting, with the brilliancy or the depth, or the rich variety of nature; with tone appropriate to historical or other subjects; being in great part a matter of taste, is not so easily reducible to rules, nor easy of discussion.

Had we materials for colouring, equally pure in their nature with those of the prism, and which would as perfectly blend together, pictures the most perfect might be produced by them, with the simple addition of white; and we should then require no more than that number of efficient colours which Pliny assigns to the practice of the ancients. But unluckily, the chemical properties of the pigments we are compelled to use, forbid any such advantage to the painter; and the tale of Pliny, from his own enumeration of the materials employed by the Greeks, must either be regarded as a mistake, or as having relation to imperfect pictures; or rather to pictures coloured upon a low and broken scale. I need only say that blue is omitted in his list, to lead you to a like con-

clusion. His colours, are white, yellow, red, and black; or blue black at best.

The materials now employed are numerous; the products of earths, of vegetables, or of minerals. They are all however, modifications in their hues of the three primitive colours, red, blue, and yellow.

To those primitive colours therefore, the whole list has reference; both in their hues as pigments, and in their application.

The chief object requisite in the use of them, is to preserve purity of hue; that is, to be careful not to make such compounds, as either chemically produce change, or simply weaken or render dull the reality of colour: as would be the effect for instance, if the slightest degree of brown were introduced into purple; or red into pure green; or of blue or black, into red. To the preservation of this purity in the hues of colours, we owe the clearest, the brightest, and the richest colouring; and consequently the neglect of it, causes dulness and monotony.

The fewer the colours that are compounded together, the less danger there is, of their native purity being destroyed; and the less they are disturbed by the action of the brush in laying them on, the clearer will be the result.

In addition to the primitive colours and their compounds, we are possessed of two other colouring substances, viz. white and

black. Philosophy denies to them the quality of colour; the one being the reflection of white light, the combined effect of the prismatic colours, and the other a negation of them; but to the painter, they are essential and important colours; giving weakness, or force, and contrast to the others, according to his will.

The power of white by itself, is limited to its contrasts with other colours, and it advances or retreats in effect, accordingly as those contrasts are strong or weak; a circumstance of infinite advantage to those who know how to make a proper use of it, like Rubens, Titian, Claude, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Mr. West; and appertaining to no other material we possess. Owing to this quality in white, it only requires care that the masses of light in a picture, be arranged in good proportions and good order and proper degrees of contrast; and no evil will ensue from the degree of brightness employed. It is the misapprehension of this, which frequently causes dull effects, where the composition would admit of bright ones. But it more frequently happens, that a bad arrangement in the proportion and relative positions of the lights in a picture, compels a painter to reduce their degrees of power artificially, in order to maintain the keeping, or proper degree of relief in the parts; or to produce good form in his chiaro-oscuro.

Black, and all the primitive colours, have more positive effects; acting more powerfully upon the eye. The warm colours, as red, or yellow, always appear to come forwards, as do all their intermixtures with other colours wherein they prevail; whereas blue, and all those compounds which partake largely of it, seem to recede, and fall into the ground of the picture. In consonance with this it necessarily arises, that it is adverse to natural effect, to paint pictures upon a principle which brings the cool colours upon the projecting objects in large masses in front, and leaves the warm colours upon those that should retire; and is not to be employed, unless peculiar circumstances demand it. This sometimes occurs in portraiture, when a blue or a grey dress is desired: when that is the case, it requires very skilful management to render the whole agreeable to the eye; and at the best, such pictures are never so acceptable, as others, conducted on the opposite principle.

This is an acknowledged theory, and supported by that great master of hue and tone, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and also by Mr. West.

Both these great artists specifically maintained this point as a general rule, which their lengthened experience confirmed; and I have dilated upon it, to show the regulating principle of nature upon which it rests, for the propriety of it

has been doubted. But even in the hands of Rubens, as Sir Joshua has observed, attempts to invert this system have failed to produce a pleasing effect.* In the gallery at Munich, are two pictures illustrative of it; one a lion hunt, where a man on a grey horse, covered with a greyer cloak, forms the front and principal object, and is relieved off a grey and blue sky. The other is a composition of portraits, and called the Arundel family. In this, the greater part of the mass of the principal figures, with a curtain connected with them, is blue and black and grey. In both pictures, the cold front masses, are surrounded by warm and rich colours; and the consequence is, that the warm colours come forward in effect, while the cold ones retire, directly opposing the nature of the composition; or, in the painter's

* I speak of this principally in relation to its efficiency for producing relief: the painter of genius will employ variations in the use of it, whenever he imagines that he may obtain some specific point by so doing; but he will vary from the rule with the greatest security, who possesses the knowledge of it. Titian, in his picture of the Saviour crowned with Thorns, has given us an example of it. He has clothed, or rather covered the front figure with grey armour, leaving the red drapery of the principal object, the Saviour, to act with its full power, and attract the eye to the figure it surrounds: thus wisely sacrificing the lesser point to secure the greater.

> "Great wits may sometimes gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults, true critics dare not mend."

language, the parts are out of keeping. Though these pictures fully exhibit the brilliant genius of the great artist who produced them, they are, in comparison with other effusions of his pencil, far from being agreeable; and show, that even Rubens himself, could not overcome the natural qualities of colour. I need not multiply examples to prove this point, though it were easy to do so. The beauty and propriety of the system of employing warm colours in front in preference to cool, is seen in most of the productions of the same powerful painter; and prove these, to be only varieties with which he chose to sport, and to indulge the fancy of the moment, but they prove the truth of the general rule.

The arrangement of colours then in a picture, becomes an important point for consideration; since we find it so essential to convey pleasure to the eye by the due relief of the parts. Sir Joshua Reynolds not only justifies this opinion, but also tells us, "that the greater mass of colour in a picture, ought to be warm, with smaller portions of cool tints, to give vivacity and to afford variety."

This is compatible with the scheme I have exhibited to you, as the order of nature. For you will observe, that as there exists two warm primary colours, and but one cool, so of course the greater portion of colours as seen in the diagram, maintains the same principle.

Again, if it be true, that pictures ought to be made ornamental and attractive, to ensure the attention of an observer, and lead him to the consideration of their better qualities, of which there can be no doubt; then it becomes an artist to choose the most engaging materials his pallette affords, for the greater portion of the surface of his picture; reserving the others for their support, by contrast or by union; thus rendering the former still more engaging. Now, the colours most powerfully acting upon the eye, are the warm colours, as red and yellow: they are therefore the fittest for the mass, as being the most attractive, and consequently the most efficient for general purposes.

The excitement of peculiar sentiment will however sometimes require other arrangements, and when painters have adopted subjects which owe much of their influence to the purity of celestial light, the scheme has of necessity been changed; for whiteness, and consequent coolness, can most agreeably convey that character. To this peculiar arrangement, duly controuled, is owing the brilliant purity of the effect of light in the Notte of Coreggio, and in his small picture of the agony of the Saviour, which is in the possession of the Duke of Wellington, and of which there is a duplicate in our national gallery; and when this is the case, the

surrounding parts retaining their original colours, and partaking of the less pure illumination of the terrestrial sphere, must of necessity appear warm and comparatively gross.*

This principle of cool lights and coloured half shades, was employed in the great domes at Parma by Coreggio, the subjects requiring such treatment; and upon this same theory, I imagine, we may account for the Florentines having fallen into the mistaken application of cool and white lights upon their figures in pictures of sacred subjects; leaving the half shadows, and indeed the whole of the shadows, more full of colour than the lights, where, in nature, it is the clearest and the strongest. Their mistake lay, if my conjecture be right, in adopting that, as a general principle for the effect of common illumination, which was only applicable to a particular purpose; and only just, when a peculiar cause could be assigned for it. This appears the more probable, as it is certainly not employed by Coreggio, when painting pictures illumined by common day-light, such as his St. Jerome, and his marriage of St. Catherine. As in form, and in composition, simplicity of effect contributes to the production of the

* In both the cases stated above, there is but little positive colour; the mass surrounding the lights being chiefly composed of warm and deep shadows.

grand and the impressive, so likewise the same system must be preserved in colouring; as best upholding its own value, and contributing to the increase of its power. For this purpose, the masses of the individual colours must be maintained undisturbed, and even extended if possible by the addition of others of similar qualities: and of the colours principally composing the masses, repetitions must be made, consonant with that continuity of parts which I pointed out in my last lecture as necessary to good composition. It is requisite, however, that these repetitions be in such proportion to each other, and occur at such intervals, as are agreeable to the eye; that they may assist in dividing the surface of the picture in such a manner as to maintain the balance and beauty of the whole.

I have shown to you in the theoretical part of this lecture, how harmony is produced in the arrangement of colours. That system however, if constantly and alone pursued, would be dull and tasteless to an extreme degree; contrasts must therefore be sometimes introduced; acting upon the eye as occasional discords in music do upon the ear: and such contrasts, of light and dark, and of colours, are the most powerful agents of the art, when employed either for expression, or for ornament. Contrast, not only gives vivacity to a picture, by producing the variety

which nature constantly exhibits, and we therefore constantly desire; but also, by attracting and fixing the attention of an observer to a particular point, at the will of an artist. It likewise aids in giving the appearance of relief and solidity to objects; and may be maintained in colours, without destroying breadth, by preserving the same degree of tint in the scale of those employed.

When contrast in the signification with which I have used the word is resorted to, and all the three primary colours, or colours of similar association, are introduced into a picture in like degree of strength, it not only does not disturb harmony, but increases it, and renders it most brilliant. Each colour discordant to the others when two only act together, then becomes an uniting one, producing with the others the entire effect of the ray of light; as blue effectually does, when placed in combination with red and yellow: contrasting with each, yet uniting with both.

This I take to be the test of propriety of contrasts as far as beauty is concerned: when, in my sense of the word, contrasts are employed for other objects, wherein expression or some peculiar effect exciting to the mind is intended, then there appears to be no other guide to their application, than that which the taste of the artist, regulated by the influence of his subject, may suggest.

Such is the power of real contrasts, that no one unacquainted with the use of colours can be conscious of its extent; owing, in great measure, to that law of nature by which our eyes are stimulated to fill up the whole measure of the colorific scale of light.

If a painter finds the colour of his picture too cold in its effect, it might naturally and truly be supposed, that the introduction of a warm colour would remedy the defect. But there is another mode in his possession, if he thinks proper to employ it, which is, by the introduction of a portion of colour still colder, such as pure blue; or if the effect be too warm, a brighter red or yellow than those employed, will neutralize its warmth, and give it comparatively a cooler tone. These however are dangerous experiments, and to be safely adopted only by him who proceeds scientifically, and understands the principles on which he acts; and even then, surprise will frequently attend the effects produced by such contrasts. Hence, the arrangement of pictures in galleries, and particularly when they are viewed *seriatim*, requires very great care; as it would be exceedingly easy for one versed in the effects of colours, to weaken, if not to destroy, the pleasing effect of the best. A person regarding for a time a rich glowing picture, where red for instance formed a pro-

minent feature, being conducted immediately from it to one of more real beauty, perhaps, but composed of cool colours, would find it, from the effect of the green hue which the red had caused to be excited in his eye, extremely cold and unengaging to him; and, *vice versâ*, we might by similar means greatly injure a warm effect; whilst the observer would be insensible of the actual cause.*

All species of artifice, however, consistent with natural effect, and proceeding to its extreme verge, are open to the use of the ingenious painter. The peculiarities which give force, purity, elegance, or strength to the varieties of contrast or of union observable in nature, are all fair subjects for his emulation; however produced, or from whatever causes arising. They have been freely employed by the different schools in which the art has flourished: and when criticism is employed upon a picture where such privilege has been indulged, it is but fair to expect of the critic, that he enquire of its effect upon his imagination; for he may not perhaps be acquainted with its truth.

There is no greater, or more perplexing difficulty, to be overcome by the painter in what

* This is an artifice of which picture-dealers are fully cognisant, and often employ it to great advantage.

relates to colouring, than that which arises from the shade tint, and the tones by which it gradates, in all the colours, to its union with light. Its general colour, be it cool or warm, must depend upon the will of the artist; to be made as he thinks best adapted to his purpose, and best suited to the nature of his subject, its scenery, and its illumination.

Though the apparent colour of darkness, or shade, be black, that will by no means suit the purposes of the painter: the necessity of producing richness and transparency in the shadows of a picture forbids it. And as reflections of light and colour in varied degrees, are constantly thrown off by all objects upon others situated near to them, he is at liberty to take as much of these reflections, or as little, as he pleases; thus rendering his shadows most agreeable, and producing the most perfect support to the beauty of his colours. Whatever be its tone, it must pervade the whole picture, and though reflections may have produced warmth in the depths, it must be made cool as it approaches the lights; blending with them, and producing the half tints: and it must in itself, be clear and transparent, showing the forms, and even the colours of the things which fall into it, or over which it is spread. This can only be effectually done by what is technically termed glazing, or using

transparent colours over others painted to form; which was the Venetian mode: or by adopting another process, that of Rubens, and painting in the shadows at once with their dark colour, leaving the ground and the forms partly seen through it.

One thing more is requisite as a general principle in the practice of colouring, which relates also to shade, or to dark colours. A picture to be efficient, particularly of any solemn subject, must not be fine in colour throughout the surface, like a gaudy china vase! indeed, the prismatic colours are rarely to be used, except in small quantities. There must be portions of the surface, where, from breadth of light and colour, or from shade, the eye may find repose, and the mind relief, from the action of the brilliant and more immediately important and impressive parts; where, due regard being maintained to the character of the subject, all the luxuriance of the pallette may be spread to advantage.

Such are the principal and most efficient general rules by which colouring is regulated: and it is only by acting upon general rules, that truly fine colouring can be produced, in entire correspondence with those rules which produce fine form. They are few in number, but they

involve in their application, all the consequences derivable from variety.

Indeed the works of nature are themselves conducted upon general principles; creating, as they act, the wonderful variety which we see around us. These varieties, in what relates to our vision, the imagination, or rather the memory of the artist must supply for his own use. It would be utterly impossible to give individual regulations concerning them; for they may be applied, or omitted, as his fancy may require. Those principles only, to the effect of which they may be referred, are the most useful; being the most necessary and the least perplexing. They lead the artist to consider nature in the grandeur of her simplicity, rather, than in the perplexity of her minutiæ; to select the greater feature, and omit the less; as unessential, and to be employed only, as occasion may require, as taste may suggest, or as beauty may demand.

Colouring has been differently valued, studied, and employed, by the different schools of painting in Greece, in Italy, Germany, Spain, Flanders and Holland.

The existing remnants of ancient paintings by the Greeks afford us a considerable degree of knowledge of the beauty and excellence of their colouring, as do also the histories of various facts relating to it: but still, our uncertainty

concerning the actual extent of its merits in the works of their best painters, renders it not exactly fitted for discussion in these lectures.

The Venetians, from nearly the earliest period of their cultivation of the art, gave their principal attention to colouring; and as far as I have been able to penetrate their secret, it is founded upon the direct application of the system I have shown to you. The use of the negative quality or colour of shade, was peculiarly their assistant in securing their truth of imitation, and particularly in the works of Titian, Giorgione, and Tintoretto; whilst they obtained richness by glazings, or the employment of transparent colours, over others properly adjusted for their reception.

Though these three able painters were the most skilful employers of the Venetian system of colouring, they were not the inventors of it, as I have already mentioned to you; it appears to be of a date far more early. When the use of water colours gave place to those mixed with oil, all the useful qualities of the materials requisite for the painter in colouring, were increased; and the best Venetian painters employed the science with more positive truth, or more just imitation of the numerous effects of nature, than any other of the Italian schools.

In the florid style of Venetian painting (principally founded upon the works of P. Ve-

ronese), dark succeeds to light, colour contrasts with colour, magnificent draperies, folded and ornamented in the richest manner, assist in effecting these purposes. These are relieved off blue skies, with clouds white as snow, or from buildings of nearly equal brilliancy; and are often upheld over columns of the most costly marbles by cords of gold; animals are introduced to give action, to create contrasts, to fill voids, and to scatter colours, till the surface is overlaid with the heaped materials; all, however, is arranged with consummate skill, and is toned to harmony with the most perfect brilliancy and richness. It is the beautiful and engaging offspring of fancy; was intended to produce an ornamental effect, was employed as decoration, and well answers its purpose.

But here ends the effect of so much execution, so much talent, so much power in employing the technical principles of the art of painting. Look for the subject, it is lost in the immense variety of incident and materials employed to represent, or rather to adorn it; seek for the sentiment it should convey, it is dissipated in the parts; direct your attention to the expression of the different figures, contrast has destroyed, or portraiture nullified them; the necessities of the style have weakened their energy, for the mind of the artist was evidently em-

ployed to effect a purpose in which they had no share.

The florid style of Venetian art therefore, is inefficient for great historical purposes, even in its merits. Its uniform brilliancy, its want of simplicity, and of the repose created by simplicity, has a tendency to disturb the mind. Every part of the surface is attractive by its beauty of form, or of colour, or its contrasts of light and dark; none are pre-eminent; and whilst that is the case, expression is necessarily violated, sentiment lost, and even a clear and distinct developement of the subject is sought for in vain. Sometimes however, in the works of the masters preceding the time of Titian, the delightful union of sentiment with fine colour prevails, as in the beautiful work of Carpaccio, the Presentation in the Temple; and in the Church of St. Zechariah, at Venice, there is a work of Giovanni Bellini, equally interesting. It was in the hands of the later masters of the Venetian school that the luxuriant style of colouring was practised. Giorgione first, and after him Titian and Tintoretto, had simplified the management of colour (upon the same principle of action as Michel Angelo had simplified design), using little of reflections, and less of tinting; thereby, whilst preserving richness of tone, giving an elevated style to it;

taking sufficient of the beauty of natural colouring to convey its character sufficiently, but unincumbered by its wonderful and perplexing minutiæ.

Thus treated, colouring becomes a fit vehicle for the most sublime inventions; and Sir J. Reynolds, whilst he declares his opinion adverse to the employment of Venetian colouring in serious historical subjects, exempts that of Titian, because it partakes of this grand and simple character.

In the Lombard school, an entirely different process seems to have been employed, with far more attention to expression than is found in the works of the Venetians generally; still producing a result of a mixed character. Coreggio and his followers seem to have painted their pictures in a less artificial manner, by at once producing a resemblance to the object pourtrayed with a full body of colour, and reserving but little for the harmony to be produced by glazing, in comparison with the mode of the Venetians. The glazing they employed was principally of a warm shade tint, uniting the boundaries of the figures with their ground; and consequently more productive of tone than of colour.

In the school of Germany and of Flanders, a system of operation for the production of

good colouring was adopted, entirely different from both; in which the shadows were at once painted thin upon the ground, and the colour of the lights only laid on in a body.

This appears to me, to have been derived from the practice of the old German painters before the use of oil colours; and was gradually improved, till Rubens gave it the splendid degree of perfection we see in his productions. But though it be powerful and beautiful, its effect is artificial, as are the means employed to produce it; and it does not fully compete with the truth of those of Titian and of Coreggio.

It is in the Dutch school, that we find the most entirely perfect imitation of the colouring of nature, as seen in her ordinary productions; and the most extraordinary minute employment and knowledge of the powers of the materials of the palette. It is there those must resort for pleasure, who, not content with the generalising principles of the great Italian schools, rather delight in imitations of the peculiar varieties of nature, in almost every object, and under almost every kind of illumination. All this is wrought with so much ability, and so fitted to the purposes for which it is employed, that whilst we are surprised, and oftentimes disgusted with the selection of subject, our feelings are overcome by our admiration of the skill of the artist.

It were unjust to pass by the honours of our own school when treating of this principle of painting, in which we now fairly lay claim to pre-eminence.

This we owe to the brilliant genius of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose colouring, in his best works, combines the highest qualities of Coreggio and of Titian, with the brilliancy and luxuriance of the Dutch and the Flemish schools deprived of their trivialities. The common error, that his colours *all* fail, ought by this time to be entirely effaced. It is too true, that such is the case, with the colouring of many pictures painted by him during a short period of his life: he thought that he had discovered a mode of rendering colouring more vivid, and employed it without duly considering the chemical qualities of his materials. But he was soon made acquainted with the mistake he had committed, reassumed his previous durable system with increased beauty and vigour, and continued to employ it till the termination of his valuable labours.

From his example, we have learned to estimate justly the imitation of broad and brilliant effects of light and colour, in preference to the confined scheme of the Florentine and Bolognese painters; and by the ingenuity and originality with which he practised his art, upon the combined

system above alluded to, he has entitled himself to a station among the ablest artists. He has thus also become the founder of a new school of painting, which has extended its influence in various directions; and given us a decided character in art: long a desideratum in our country.

LECTURE IX.

ON CHIARO-OSCURO.

1829.

LECTURE IX.

ON CHIARO-OSCURO.

GENTLEMEN,

THE principle of the art of painting to which I would now direct your attention, is CHIARO-OSCURO.

It comprehends not only light and shade, without which the forms of no object can be perfectly represented; but also, all arrangements of light and dark colours, in every degree: in short, in accordance with the words composing its name, which we have adopted from the Italian, the light and dark of a picture.

Though the laws of nature, as illustrated by the science of optics, must be the guiding principles of the painter in the representation of natural objects, it is in his own power to command the course, and the degree, and the colour of the light which illumines them. He can likewise, so direct the illumination he employs, in accordance with the arrangement of his figures and the forms produced by their

combinations, that he may cause them to take any order, or variety of effect, most agreeable to his taste. By the introduction of extraneous objects, or the supposition of them, he may produce shadows upon his figures; and by such artificial means, aiding the natural effects of light and shade, he may create masses of light and dark composing agreeable forms throughout the surface of his pictures. The result of these combinations, which are now become essential to good painting, is understood by the compound word, CHIARO-OSCURO; and also by the simple one, EFFECT.

As it is by light and dark hues of colour, producing light and shade, that the appearance of projection is given to the forms of objects exhibited by design upon a flat surface; it is by Chiaro-oscuro in its most extended sense, that all those objects which are represented in a picture are made to operate to one end. It is therefore the most efficient means in possession of a painter for directing the attention of an observer to whatever portion of his picture he thinks proper.

Chiaro-oscuro thus becomes the governing principle of effect in painting; or that control over design, composition, and colouring, which most agreeably unites and displays the perfections of each, or of them all; or which

(so powerful is its influence), can disguise their defects, and render pleasing, works deficient in those important requisites of fine art.

It is producible by light and shade only, or by light and dark colours; but is generally the most effective when they are combined: that is, when order and arrangement are given to masses of light or of shade, by uniting them with light or dark colours. Thus, without falsifying the nature of the illumination employed, painters obtain breadth and arrangement of light and dark throughout the surfaces of their pictures; or, in the technical phrase of the art, Chiaro-oscuro.

Before I treat of this artificial management of light and dark, it is necessary that I should more distinctly dwell upon the properties of light itself. I do not mean in its natural qualities as sought by the philosopher, but by the painter, in the effects it produces on our sense of vision by its reflection from the surfaces of objects, and from the atmosphere around us; and of its privation also, which we call shadow.

The varied influence of that great element of nature, light, seen throughout the progress of the day, the twilight, and the moon-illumined night; in the rays of fire, or of the torch, or the lightning, has been from time immemorial, the theme of the poet; far more is it a medium of effect fitted for the employment of the painter.—

Creating, or exhibiting, as it does, his subject, and producing the means by which he attains his object, all his art depends upon it.

By the agency of light, and of the shadows that it produces, we are made sensible of the forms of solid bodies without actual contact with them; and by imitating with light and dark colours its force and its gradations to darkness, or the interruptions it meets with as it acts upon the globe, the column, or the cube, we are enabled to represent upon a plane surface the projections of those forms; and to realise the images supplied to our fancy by outline.

As the sources of light are various, so also are its qualities, differing in the directions and extent of its rays, and in its colour; each has its appropriate character and effect. The diffused light which is afforded by day when the sun is enveloped in clouds, and which proceeds from a combined mass of reflections from the illumined atmosphere, yields of course an effect unconcentrated, widely expanded, and producing faint and ill-defined shadows; but when the beams of the sun are uninterrupted in their course, the effect is the reverse. From the magnitude, and great distance of that luminary, we are accustomed to consider its light as descending to us in parallel rays; causing shadows varying in their forms from the shapes of the bodies

which cast them, according to the angle at which the ray of light falls, and the direction of the surfaces upon which they are cast.

It is different with the shadows caused by the interception of light radiating from lesser sources; they are broad, and differ more widely in their forms from those of the bodies which cause them.

The effect of form upon our vision is not more potent over our minds than that of light, and its concomitant, shade; but there is a curious contrariety in the modes by which the effect of light is produced by nature, and by art. In nature light causes shade; in art, however paradoxical it may seem, shade is the cause of light; or rather, light and shade reciprocally generate each other. Our agent, that is, the pigment we employ as the representative of light, is white; but if used either alone, or in combination with any other colour uncontrasted by darker hues, it remains a flat uninteresting mass, without conveying any idea of that quality which we call luminous; and which can be imparted to it only, when darker colours acting as shadows, through the intervention of form, are placed near to it, and blended into, or contrasted with it. The same want of character is found in masses of dark hues of colour, as of black; which, however deep it may be, does

not assume the influence of shade unless contrasted by lighter colours.

If we regard the scale of effect caused by the sun-beam, from the brightest reflection of its rays to the deepest shadow which accompanies it, and then compare with it that of our palette; we find, that the hope of rivalling its power with such inadequate means is vain. Depth we have, the blackness of darkness we can produce, or nearly so; but from thence to white, our extreme in the opposite direction, is a short course; and we are thus obliged to compose our scale upon a lower pitch, and so manage the gradations of tone within that scale, as to produce the quantum of variety required. Thus, however, we may cause enough of imitation to excite in the mind a recollection of the effect we would, if possible, fully imitate.

The management of contrast in the tones of the colours by which light and shade are produced in painting, requires great attention to several points. First, the positive direct reflection of the light from the surface of the body to be represented, technically called its high-light; which is, in fact, a reflection more or less clear of the luminary; then, the gradation of light, or diminution of its brilliancy as it recedes from the high-light towards the shadow, and technically called its half tint, or its middle tint or

half shade; next, the shadow itself; afterwards the reflections which are cast upon the shadowed sides of objects from surrounding bodies, or from the atmosphere, and prevent the shadow from becoming black; and last of all, the shade cast by the object upon the ground, or upon adjoining substances. If the position and the perspective form of each of these be not accurately defined, the real figure of the object will not be effectively conveyed; and if the contrasts they require are not duly adjusted and blended together, its relief in itself or from its ground will be confused, or but partially effected.

If there be one point among those just mentioned of greater importance than the rest, it is doubtless the high-light; and the placing of it requires the most exact adjustment. It will always be found upon that portion of the figure, from whence a line drawn to the luminary and another to the eye of the artist, subtend equal angles with the plane of its surface. For though that may not in reality be the precise spot where the rays of the luminary are most directly intercepted by the body; yet it is effectively so to him, whose eye can receive only those rays which are thrown off in reflection towards him.

It results from this rule, that the extreme edge of a round body can scarcely ever be the

seat of its brightest light; it will rather, as it recedes from the observer, lose its lustre; and if the ground be dark, will blend in measure with it; but if equally light with the body itself, a dark line of separation will be visible. These are delicacies of effect which escape common observation, but are of infinite moment to a painter.

The employment of light and shade upon figures in their quantity and their quality, are other points of the utmost moment; so much does character, expression, breadth and beauty in painting, depend upon the choice made in these matters: and it is beautifully exemplified by natural scenery.

If we consider the difference of the effects produced upon our minds by the same objects in nature, when seen under different degrees or different kinds of illumination; how we have passed them with indifference, or disregard at one time, or dwelt upon the view of them with enthusiastic delight at another, the force of the observation I have just made must be powerfully felt.

Considerations of this nature lead the painter to understand what principle of illumination will best suit his purpose; as most appropriate to the nature of his subject, and most advantageous for its representation.

We know, that our minds are powerfully excited by quantity in nature. To this, the sea, the mountain, the plain, the lake, or the forest, owe much of their influence over us. The lengthened shadows of the morning and the evening, by their extent add grandeur to scenes, which under the glittering rays of the mid-day sun were merely pleasing. This, almost invariably, produces serenity of mind within us; for which we know of no cause more influential, than the singleness of effect caused by the breadth of shade thus created, and the repose which the eye finds in regarding it. The degree of mystery in which it involves the objects submitted to its influence, (obscuring, but not concealing them from our view,) has at all times been a source of delight to the poet and the painter.

That which so evidently gratifies the eye in nature, must also be pleasing to it in works of art. Hence breadth of light and shade, as well as of form, is our constant theme of admiration; and it becomes necessary for a painter to introduce light upon his figures in such a direction, as without destroying their beauty, or impeding the clearness and force of their expression, may best impart this quality to them. But it remains with him, as the arbiter of the

application of every principle of the art upon which his works are conducted, to select an effect suitable to his own purposes; to produce as he pleases, seriousness, by a preponderance of shadow; or cheerfulness, by that of light.

For the production of that desirable quality of breadth in painting, light introduced sideways, in various degrees, is more available than a front light. It was thus employed by Michel Angelo: and I agree with Mr. Fuseli when he says that "breadth of light and shade, owes to him its origin; that he at least, first employed it effectively upon a great scale." His choice of the direction of light on his figures, and the simple forms of their draperies, are well adapted to produce it in a natural manner.

By this breadth, he added greatly to the serious impression belonging to the design of his subjects; and the grandeur of its effect was acknowledged by all the subsequent artists of Italy. The introduction of light sideways, not only creates great breadth of light and shade upon a figure, but it also gives, more completely than any other scheme, the power of separating figures from each other; or, if thought proper, of uniting part with part, and figure with figure, at the will of the painter; adding great grace and beauty to composition.

This peculiarity in the application of light and shade, leads me to the consideration of CHIARO-OSCURO in its most extended sense.

That powerful agent for producing effect or peculiar influence on the mind, is available, like form, for two distinct purposes; to impress sentiment, as it was employed by Rembrandt more effectually than by any other painter; or to charm with beauty, as in the hands of Coreggio; and become ornamental, as in those of Tintoretto, Veronese, and all the lower Venetian masters.

The importance of light and shade in the production of Chiaro-oscuro, has created much confusion in the minds of persons not conversant with art, and in most writers upon the subject. Mr. Webb for instance, in his agreeable, though unessential enquiry into the beauties and merits of painting and painters, completely confounds the relief afforded by light and shade, with that arrangement of light and dark, which constitutes chiaro-oscuro, and which employs light and shade as one of its agents.

It is the want of distinction between these two things, the one an important principle of the art, the other only its agent, which has led many to suppose, that because very extraordinary effects of light and shade are recorded of the paintings of the ancient Greeks, that therefore, they were well acquainted with the science of

Chiaro-oscuro. But that is by no means a clear deduction. For we frequently see the like powerful relief, created in the most common-place manner; without the slightest degree of approach to Chiaro-oscuro, or requiring any particularly artful, or systematic management.

Again: Though Chiaro-oscuro may be so employed, as to assist in giving the effect of distance in a picture; it is upon perspective, producing proportion, and upon colour, that such effect principally depends; and not on chiaro-oscuro specifically. That principle is equally efficient, and may be as usefully employed in subjects requiring very little separation of parts; as in the Cradle-scene by Rembrandt. It is, in fact, simply the arrangement and proportional distribution of the lights and the darks of a picture, with the gradations of the intermediate tints and tones uniting them. It may be produced by a mere blot, which has no relation to any thing; and the principle or arrangement the blot presents, whether concentrated or dilated in its effect, being preserved, it may be converted into a picture by employing forms, or substances of any kind, near or afar off, which are calculated to afford the light and dark required by it.

The native power of Chiaro-oscuro in works of painting, may be seen by its being so independ-

ent of colouring, and acting so powerfully without its assistance. Black and white alone, when united with form, are found adequate to produce nearly its full effect; and even blotches of light or dark accidentally cast, such as I have just mentioned, accompanying each other, are often found to produce ideas affecting to the mind; the imagination supplying the form.

Our term picturesque (adopted from the French) is the product of this principle, as applied to form and to colour.

It is not difficult to imitate the common effects of light and shade upon the objects around us. But that ideal, or poetic management of them, which by tone, by arrangement, by regulated quantities, by contrasts, by union, produce sensations within us, like those attendant upon actual circumstances of a nature grave or gay, dreadful or mysterious, awful or sublime, (and such is the power of Chiaro-oscuro,) can only be understood by a philosophic observation of the operations of nature; aided by an acquaintance with fine works of art.

Thus employed, Chiaro-oscuro is next in quality among the principles of the art, to design; and tone, of which I spoke in my last lecture as distinct from colour, is its true agent.

It presents, as I have said, two objects for our consideration. Its relation to expression, when

we regard it philosophically; and its more technical employment for rendering the surface of a picture agreeable; by dividing it into parts of light and dark well proportioned to each other. These parts must be so modified by gradation, as to produce softness and harmony when they are blended in their extremes; or brilliancy and richness, when freely contrasted. By such arrangements in a picture, the eye of an observer being attracted to it, is conducted (if I may so speak) over its surface, without confusion; and in a manner which excites agreeable sensations within it.

The first, or philosophic mode of the application of Chiaro-oscuro, admits of no specific regulations. Such control would indeed be bonds upon genius, and fetters upon imagination; in the freedom of which exists the very essence of the art. Feeling, a sense of character in the subject, and a knowledge of the mode by which nature acts in causing the sensation we desire to excite, and to which I have just referred, must alone be relied upon; so nearly infinite are the varieties which may be required. Rubens frequently gratifies us with the brilliancy and breadth of effect of broad daylight, spread almost equally over every part of a picture, the local colours alone producing the chiaro-oscuro; thus rendering it suitable to the gay scene he illustrates

while, on the contrary, we behold with pleasure many works of Rembrandt, upon whose surfaces the representation of light is confined to a small compass; sometimes to a twentieth, or even thirtieth portion of them, and have of course very little local colour. Between these two extremes all the intermediate degrees may be made available, as the taste or sensibility of the painter may suggest, or require.

Though the scale of proportion of the masses of light or dark be thus placed at the will of the artist, or as his imagination may guide him; and is out of the reach of regulation, being dependent upon the necessities of the subject; yet there are positive principles which govern them when admitted.

The eye must be attracted to the principal object of the picture, by its being relieved either by light upon dark, or the reverse; merging the inferior persons or things in obscurity in proportion to their importance. If there be more than one mass of light, which seldom of itself has been made to produce an agreeable effect, it will be found best to introduce odd numbers rather than even: three, rather than two, for instance, preserving one predominant in extent, and varying the proportions of the others in quantity and effect. If they are reduced in given proportions, as from eight to five, three, or one; that is, if such

or other regulated proportions are found among them, the eye will view them with the greater pleasure; since it always requires, for its most perfect gratification, well regulated order and proportion in the parts of all objects placed before it.

As no two masses of light or dark ought to be equal in size, so ought they not to be alike in shape, nor parallel in position: that never-ending research after variety which we are taught by nature to desire, will not permit us to be satisfied with such monotony. To gratify us, the masses must vary in quantity, in form, and in station; and be connected by lesser and fainter mediums; so that no abrupt transitions, except for especial purposes, may disturb the pleasure of the eye in traversing the work.

To assist that effect, the masses of light and dark ought to be so arranged, that a line passing in connection through them should be of an agreeable form.

This technical mode of considering Chiaro-oscuro is extremely valuable in all applications of the art, or in judging of the skill of an artist. It not unfrequently happens, that paintings extremely interesting from the possession of other peculiar and valuable qualities, are passed unobserved for want of it; while those which have little merit, except that of presenting a pleasing

arrangement and variety of light and dark, attract and secure attention.

Chiaro-oscuro, be it of light and shade, or of colours, is capable of great efficiency under a diversity of characters, from the weakest to the most powerful which contrast can produce. It has no relation to execution, or to the finishing of a work; the slightest sketches, wrought in the enthusiasm of feeling, being sometimes more perfectly effective than highly finished pictures.

A powerful effect is produced by using bright lights and colours, with strong dark oppositions to them, in whatever degree as to quantity they may be employed. In general, a small portion of light with broad and strong dark shadows, is the most certain mode of obtaining it. Of this class, are the works of Caravaggio and Spagnoletto, and many who have imitated them. Both Rembrandt and Rubens employed it occasionally. We see it in the picture of the Cradle by the former, and in his picture, in our National Gallery, of the Woman taken in Adultery, in the Departure of the Angel from Tobias, and many others. It is given by Coreggio in the Notte at Dresden, and in his small picture of the Magdalen in the same gallery. In both these pictures, it is managed with the utmost sweetness of tone; much more delightful and pure than

any of the above-mentioned masters have ever obtained.

The works of our ingenious countryman, Mr. Opie, with which many of you must be acquainted, are also excellent examples of power and vigour of effect, gained by strength of contrast in Chiaro-oscuro, and in colour; and in the more confined use of light and shade, and degree of relievo of individual objects, he was never surpassed. Many of his figures appear absolutely round, and fully to project from the canvass.

A more pleasing, but less powerful kind of effect is produced, by making use of less violence of opposition, less sudden transition from light to dark, and from colour to colour, blending the lights and shades with greater breadth of half tint; and instead of giving the shadows a great depth of tone, allowing them to partake of reflections from the atmosphere, as well as from surrounding objects. Such is the beautiful effect produced by Rembrandt in the small picture, in our National Gallery, of the Birth of the Saviour.

If a still more pleasing effect of Chiaro-oscuro be desired, the subject chosen for representation being of a gay and light character, then great variety of tints, a bright tone of colour, and sparkling lights and darks in the midst of a general mass

of light, should be selected. Of this, Paul Veronese, Rubens, and Watteau, present the best examples. The old French school proceeded upon this principle: till, in fact, they proved that it is as dangerous to push even a good system too far, as to proceed entirely without one.

Rubens united very much of it with the style of Venetian composition. But so wide is the range of his genius, and his works of course so various, that we may find exemplars of every class of Chiaro-oscuro in his productions. His picture of the Descent from the Cross is, perhaps, his best example of the grave and serious; presenting us with vivid colouring controlled by a tone of illumination more appropriate and expressive than is usually found in his sacred pictures. The Chiaro-oscuro of this work is obtained by employing one stream of light, broken and varied in its course; and occupying about one third of the surface of the picture, assisted by the hues of the colours employed. His hunting and bacchanalian scenes, and his varied pictures of the Wise Men's Offering, afford specimens of the most rich and gay character; arranged in infinite variety of forms, and painted with corresponding power.

It is a curious feature in the progress of the art of painting, that though shadow always accompanies the effect of light, and consequently must always have been before the eyes

of the painter; and not only common light and shade, but also all the varied effects produced by accidental illumination; yet that their importance and their use should have continued so long unnoticed or disregarded. Even to this time, deep shade is rejected by the Chinese and most of the Eastern nations; or employed by them in a very slight degree. And though, as I have before observed, there are some remarkable examples reported of the effects of light and shade in the pictures of the Grecian painters; yet it does not satisfactorily appear, either from report, or the remnants of their painting, that they advanced to the knowledge of the value of Chiaro-oscuro.

In general we are led to conclude, that their study was rather to give each figure its appropriate light and shade, than to blend the whole in general effect. When Pliny tells us, "that the hand of Alexander grasping the thunderbolt appeared to project from the canvass," it presents us with a perfect idea of powerful light and shade and excellent keeping; but it has no relation to Chiaro-oscuro, as now understood and employed. It is the same idea which is presented to us, when Philostratus, describing a picture of Venus, says, "the goddess does not seem to be painted, but springs from the canvass as if she would be pursued."

We have not, from these accounts, any authority to suppose that they understood the art of uniting light to light, and shade to shade, and colour to colour, so as to produce masses of each, acting in varied gradations; by which a painter may extend or diminish, or round his groups, in almost endless variety, according as his taste or feeling may dictate. This was reserved for later times, and is displayed in the works of the Venetian painters, in those of Coreggio, and of the painters in the Flemish and Dutch schools; and likewise in those of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. West, Mr. Opie, and Mr. Fuseli.

Even when the art re-appeared, so slow was the progress of human perceptions concerning the value of the culture of Chiaro-oscuro, that for two hundred years use was made (by the able Florentine painters) of those peculiarities in the effect of light and shade and colours, which are productive of it; although they must have been constantly before them, and are now felt to be so indispensable in good pictures.

We find it first employed by the Venetians; but principally in the arrangements of colours, the least efficient mode of producing it.

The enlarged and philosophic mind of Lionardo da Vinci first perceived the value of a concentrated light; and surrounding it by dark, then

blended them by imperceptible degrees. He thus gave a gentleness and grace to imitation which had not before been effected; and in which tone, rather than colour, predominates. This principle he extended in his Battle of the Standard, and still more in the Last Supper, at Milan; the arrangement of which, as to Chiaro-oscuro, is totally changed and lost in Morghen's print from it.*

But the breadth and ingenuity of arrangement of Chiaro-oscuro in the plan of Da Vinci, falls infinitely short of that of Coreggio.

Instead of the system of Lionardo, which engages more shade than light in its plan, Coreggio gave to light the principal portion of his surface, at least in his Duomos; and extending it by colours as well as by illumination, has

* This concentrated arrangement of Chiaro-oscuro became the useful medium through which Mr. Fuseli sought to give strength and effect to the imaginative perceptions of his powerful, though eccentric genius. The peculiar constitution of his mind directed him to select subjects for his pencil, for the exemplification of which light and shade and tone were the fittest instruments. We see it, conducted with infinite taste and skill, in many of his historical and poetical pictures, and in a far greater degree of perfection than probably Lionardo ever contemplated; as in the Vision of the Ghost to Hamlet, and in the Lazar House; whilst in his large compositions from the Midsummer Night's Dream, we have more extended and playful employment of it.

taught us, in combination with others, how beautifully and powerfully, Chiaro-oscuro may be applied to great historical purposes.

This beau ideal of effect is his principal agent: and though the mellowness and beauty of his colouring is delightful, it is the engaging simplicity combined with richness in his Chiaro-oscuro, which fascinates us while regarding his pictures; notwithstanding the weakness of his drawing, and in those large works, of his expression.

He effected entirely that important portion of Chiaro-oscuro which gives space around each figure, and yet by imperceptible gradations connects them with their ground, or with others in the group; and so completes the union of the whole to one end.

For this purpose, he chiefly employed tone, expanded through all his colours; which thus skilfully directed, gives richness to the weakest scale of colouring, and adds splendour to the brightest. It was this perfection of effect, added to the beauty of his colouring, which made Titian exclaim, when he saw his works at Parma, that "he had at length found a painter!"

The name of Titian excites other ideas of the rrangement and the mode of producing Chiaro-oscuro. For this purpose, light and dark co-

lours, with common light and shade, had been employed before his time by the Venetians.

But he and Giorgione, first arranged them with efficient truth; counterbalancing the parts of pictures, by a just and picturesque distribution of hue and tone. In the subsequent periods of the life of Titian, he added more of tone and less of colour; which gave a grander character to his Chiaro-oscuro.

Though the display of this principle in the works of Coreggio renders them so excellent in their kind; yet it must be confessed, that the artifice with which it is conducted is generally perceptible, and attracts attention for itself. It is much more perfect when the distribution of lights and darks arise apparently from the natural means produced by the subject; and then, it becomes the most proper medium for fine historical art.

Such must have been the Chiaro-oscuro (if they had any) of the ancient Greek painters, and such is the Chiaro-oscuro admirably obtained by Raffaelle in the Death of Ananias, in St. Peter and St. John healing the Lame Man, the St. Peter in Prison, the Miracle of Bolsena, the Heliodorus, and others of his works. In this particular, Poussin has followed his principles, and sometimes with increased beauty; and it is but an act of justice to the fame of our venerated Pre-

sident, Mr. West, if I add, that he, pursuing the same track, though with somewhat more of artifice, has improved upon both in the management of Chiaro-oscuro throughout a composition. Witness his Regulus returning to Carthage; his Pyrrhus at the foot of Glaucias; his Lear, and many others of his numerous works.

But perhaps it must be acknowledged, that the most perfect example we have of inartificial Chiaro-oscuro, or that which being well regulated, appears to be conducted without artifice to an imposing effect, is to be found in the St. Peter Martyr by Titian. It is the best general exemplification of the union of all the higher principles of the art, and by A. Caracci was denominated "the picture without a fault."

In that grand composition, two lights being generated by the nature of the subject, that of the glory around the angels in the upper part, and that of the drapery of the monks in the lower, Titian has artfully contrived to unite them, by means of the clouds in the sky and the white flowers on the bush around the trunk of the tree in the centre of the picture; arranged in a waving line through the surface, and varied in their proportions as to size. To support this line of light, and prevent its being too distinct, and rendering his artifice too apparent, he has given breadth by the half tint of the sky; and contrasted

the combined mass thus created, by the finely varied forms and hues of the dark mass made by the trees and the ground. Thus the proportions of the lights and darks blend with the arrangement of them to produce beauty and expression, without any exhibition of the art which has combined them; at least, to the common observer.

I have already remarked, that every subject, which has any peculiar character, or conveys any particular expression or sentiment, that is, has passion attached to it, requires appropriate treatment. We see it exemplified in a form different from the examples I have adduced, in the dull and extended sombrous hue, caused by the overcharging waters of the deluge, as represented by Poussin, spread almost equally over every portion of the picture. The objects which serve to vary it are few; and to this appropriate management of tone of illumination, giving little relief or variety of effect, is owing the powerful influence of the picture; which Rousseau is said to have contemplated with tears. Poussin has mistakenly attempted to give it vivacity by introducing a piece of red drapery not subjected to the same tone of illumination as the rest, an error seen in most of his historical pictures. By this, perhaps, he intended to increase the general effect, but it offends by its want of accord; and attracting attention to itself,

thereby weakens the interest which the nature of the composition, and its Chiaro-oscuro, is intended to inspire; and which, notwithstanding this defect, it does inspire.

It is not, however, in the works of Poussin, generally, that we can successfully seek for the best illustration of the power or the beauty of Chiaro-oscuro; and if we except the productions of Titian and Coreggio, the Italian schools of painting afford but imperfect specimens of it, in comparison with the productions of other schools where it really was a governing principle; where beauty of form, where elevation of character, where dignity of expression, and even propriety of action, gave way to the beauty of art; and to imitation, rendered perfect by the most ingenious and intelligent employment of the materials of the palette. I scarcely need say I allude to the schools of Flanders and of Holland; where works were produced which, in despite of all that I have said, gratify the eye and oftentimes present delight to the imagination.

The painters of those schools do not appear to owe their management of Chiaro-oscuro, in any degree to the Italians; that is, to Da Vinci, or Coreggio, whose style they most resemble; but rather to a gradual progress of refinement among the Germans, from whom their art is derived.

Not elevated in their views of the application

of the art of painting, like the Italians, they sought to pourtray with exactness the objects and effects around them; and were soon conducted to the principle I am now considering. We see its pervading influence throughout their pictures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; most powerfully in the latter. It is spread through all the region wherein they employed the art; in history, in portraiture, in landscape, and in still life: giving a charm to all, even the lowest.

Of prints from Dutch and Flemish pictures, and of the pictures themselves, there are such numerous examples constantly within your reach, that I need only thus generally refer you to them. In the examination of most of them you will find upon the first view an agreeable accord of the whole, producing a pleasing impression upon the eye; and when more closely studied, you will perceive this to be owing to the excellent regulations of arrangement and proportion among the principal masses of light and dark; and to the introduction of smaller portions of each, uniting the larger ones, and spreading the lights and darks throughout the surface in pleasing associations.

Amongst them, however, Rubens and Rembrandt, at once gay, solemn, grand, and sometimes pathetic or terrific, display its power with

almost inconceivable influence; and more than all, teach us its surprising capabilities. And whether we pursue, in the pictures of Rubens, the astonishing management of light, diffused throughout the surface of a picture; glowing in its tone, and only interrupted by darker hues, adding richness and depth to its scale! or with Rembrandt, making shade occupy the larger share of the surface, we meditate on the lustre of the sunbeam, or the duller hues and solemn effect of the twilight, the gloom of the cavern, or the cell; or the glimmering light of the torch, or the lamp; we are astonished at the consummate skill of the artists, and the power of the art; and captivated by the sentiment and the pleasure which are irresistibly impressed upon our minds, when its capabilities are wielded by men of such imaginative genius.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, selecting from each, and combining their charms with his own perceptions of the object of his peculiar practice, has thence enhanced the beauty of those enchanting works he has left to us; which in Chiaro-oscuro, as well as in colour and character and expression, have so largely contributed to establish the existing fame of our country, being now elevated in art, as in science, and in arms.

I have thus, Gentlemen, endeavoured to lead you to a just estimation of the most proper and becoming objects on which the art of painting may be employed; and to explain to you the rules or principles upon which its higher efforts have been conducted: and though our practice, arising principally from the change of feeling which has taken place concerning the art, and the direction given to it by the patronage of the day, leads us for the most part, to an extremely different application of it; yet our labours may be most efficiently conducted by attention to the same rules.

The general principles governing the arrangement of line, of composition and effect, and of harmony and contrast of colour, are alike fitted for all portions of the practice of painting; because they are derived from nature. Yet it remains a doubt, with many of great authority, whether their union in choice selection, such as they are presented to us individually in each of the schools of Italy, would benefit the highest class of the productions of painting: that is, whether fine colouring, or picturesque Chiaro-oscuro, would not detract from the influence of the grand style of design and composition.

It is certainly a question of infinite importance to the interests of the art, and worthy of careful consideration. I am inclined to unite with those who defend it; for I cannot, I confess,

consent to the proposition which follows our denial of the propriety of this union; viz. that perfection may arise out of imperfection; or to speak still stronger, that truth can arise out of falsehood.

The imperfections of colour among the Florentines, of drawing among the Lombards, and of expression among the Venetians, led the Caracci to desire an union of their better qualities. Unfortunately they did not succeed in their attempt to effect it, as I mentioned in the historical part of these lectures; and that has led to animated discussions upon the propriety of the attempt.

It appears to me, however, that the arguments which have been urged on either side, have been drawn from different perceptions of the basis of the theory proposed by the Caracci; and that hence has arisen, a greater degree of difference of opinion in appearance, than probably in reality existed.

If on the one side we conceive, that they embraced in their system the possibility of uniting the excess of the peculiar qualities of each school, the ornamental and the grave, the graceful and the severe, without reference to subject; then we can have little hesitation in deciding, that, so heterogeneous a combination must of necessity be productive of imperfection and

confusion. But if, on the other hand, we limit our ideas of their plan to the union of the beauty of those natural truths, on the representation of which those different schools are founded, duly adjusted to the subject treated, I can see no reason for an opinion at variance with it; or for doubting that such an union, were it effected, would be a manifest extension of the power and the excellence of art.

What is it that excites our admiration in the productions of each of these great Italian schools of painting, which have proceeded upon such different principles and presented such different qualities and effects for our contemplation and delight? In what do we find it, if not in the perfection to which each of them carried their select imitation of that particular portion of the works of nature, which each made its principal object of study! In the Florentine, the loftiness of its aim, its purity and grandeur of design, its excellence of composition and of expression; we recognise the truth of its endeavours, and are gratified by it, notwithstanding imperfect colouring and Chiaro-oscuro. In the Lombard, an imitation of occasional mysterious or brilliant effects of light and shade, the circumstantial, not the general effects of nature; united with pure colour, with breadth, with softness, and with grace! We acknowledge its truth in the

works of Coreggio, are delighted and enjoy it, regardless of indifferent drawing. In the Venetian, the beautiful colouring that we see, corresponds with our knowledge of that quality in natural objects; and the masses of light and dark in which it is arranged, are composed with so much variety, are made so agreeable in form, and so consonant with nature; that though surrounded by the most egregious nonsense, we select the truly good, and admire it.

Truth then, in painting, either in the whole or in part, an appeal to our knowledge of that which we see chosen as the chief object of study, is the real source of our pleasure; and it leads us to overlook the defects observable in each of these schools, though not to justify them: and since it is truth of representation which gratifies us in each, notwithstanding the defects that accompany it; there appears to me but little reason in supposing, that the union of those truths would not afford us more perfect delight.

That true and judicious application of tone and colour to form and expression, in unison with the quality of a subject, is extremely difficult to obtain, every one must be sensible; as all things of extreme perfection are. It was nevertheless obtained by Titian in the Peter Martyr; and while there exist other works, which either on the whole or in part, prove its practicability,

and that, in the very school which has been supposed to adopt in preference, the severe style*; I think we may, under the limitation I have mentioned, with security recommend the attempt.

Tone, which may be varied by the painter at his pleasure, is the great agent for the regulation of this important point.

The extent of its influence may be conceived, when we recollect that it is the product of the illumination employed, and pervades the atmosphere that surrounds us; and affecting the colours of the shadows, as well as of the lights, enters into all the half tints of a picture; and thus takes possession of three fourths of its surface at least.

It is upon such fair principles of enquiry, that modern art rests for its support. Whereon may we hope to found a name, if this be denied to us. All other avenues to fame in the arts are preoccupied; and it will be vain to seek to do more than to follow in imitation, the examples that have been set to us, if we may not endeavour to combine the good we derive from them.

In pursuing this system of enquiry into the

* Many of the pictures of Fra Bartolomeo. And I think it is but due respect to Sir Thos. Lawrence, also to mention his picture of Mr. Kemble in the character of Hamlet, as an excellent instance of the beauty of the union to which I have alluded in the text.

necessities of the practice of painting, it may be useful to consider the quality, and the quantity of executive imitation, best fitted for its most valuable purposes. The true principle of it consists in knowing how much to finish to perfection, and when to be satisfied with the remaining various parts. This is of no slight importance, and calls upon the artist for the purest exertions of taste.

To elicit sentiment by a picture, the whole must be conducted to one end; but finishing it all over to an equal degree of completion, impedes this desirable effect. Every part, then becomes equally impressive, the mind is distracted by the force of the parts, instead of entertaining a feeling of the whole; as it would do, were the principal part, that whereon the subject rests for effect, brought to the greatest degree of completion, and the rest subordinately laboured, though not neglected; painted with character, but not highly finished.

This is consistent with natural effect! Consider for a while, that we can see one object only, in a perfect manner, at one moment. We regulate our vision by an imperceptible power, and with inconceivable rapidity, to a focus accordant with the distance of the object we especially observe; and all other objects, before, or beyond, or around it, are less distinctly seen by

us at the time, though their characteristic forms and colours are impressed upon our eyes. This peculiar degree of clearness of view of the object of our choice, giving power to it above all others over our minds as well as our eyes, at once establishes a principle for the regulation of art; and it is upon this principle that the finest pictures in the world have been executed.

It must also be recollected that although in observing the works of nature, we thus change the focal distance of vision, according to the distance of the objects we desire to view; yet in regarding a picture, which is a plane surface, no such change of focus is requisite. All is equally distant from the eye; and we cannot justly imitate the effect of nature, whenever we attempt to give interest to a particular point, but by the artificial mode of proceeding which I have pointed out. In subjects, where there is no point of interest particularly prevailing, as in most of the Dutch pictures, beautiful execution, spread over every part, becomes a portion of its excellence.

It is upon the principle of partial completion, that imitation of peculiar stuffs in drapery cannot be used in historical art without injury to the main effect; or that too nice a discrimination even of the foldings of draperies used in common, ought not to be closely pursued. Minute attention to such particulars attracts the

mind from the main object, the expression of the figures; upon which, and not upon such unimportant points, the characteristic display of a subject depends.

The same rule operates in portraiture: and could the world be convinced of it, great would be the advantage to that portion of the practice of painting. The real and unchangeable likeness, consists, not in minute imitations of all the changeable portions of the face, or of the figure, which, year after year, we see flitting before us, and presenting perpetual change as far as they are concerned: it consists much more in the general proportions of the parts to each other; in the immoveable character which is attached to the general structure of the head, and of the figure; to that in short, by which we know a man as well at a distance as near at hand. The very natural desire to have minute resemblance, so constantly expressed by persons who have not considered the subject, has destroyed far more true portraits, than ever can be produced by attention to it.

The principle, that too much and too close imitation ought not to be attempted in pictures where character is the main object, or in historical works which aim at imposing a powerful mental effect; depends not only upon the basis I have mentioned, but also upon the impossi-

bility of carrying it to entire perfection. We could not, if we would, imitate the works of nature with absolute precision. Gerard Dow and Mieris, with all their minuteness, would tell us that they had left much unrepresented in the subjects of their elaborate productions.

When a person, admiring a painting of Mieris, particularly expatiated on the perfection of imitation in a stand to which a parrot was attached, the painter informed him, that so far from being complete in its imitation of the natural pole, he should employ three days more to perfect it.

Whenever, therefore, sufficient representation is given to excite in the mind of an observer an image of the subject, it is better not to run the risk of disturbing its effect by carrying imitation further and exciting comparisons with the actual power of the natural object. By this means we leave the idea of the image excited to act upon the imagination of the observer; who, undisturbed by such comparisons fills up the void for himself, and becomes a participator in the production of the work.

This is consonant with the best productions of all the greater poets; who, though lavish in the rich accumulations of ideas which the utmost brilliancy of imagination can furnish, never labour their descriptions to minuteness; but still leave

somewhat for the occupation of the fancy of the reader.

And if indeed, the art of painting has merited the renown it enjoys; if it be truly, a gem glittering bright among those that adorn the protracted fame of nations; its superior value can arise only from the pure emanations of mind which have been displayed in its productions; and not from those exertions which merely display its manual perfections.

This highly cultivated and refined class of art; this almost sacred source of all that is beautiful and excellent in works of imagination, must of necessity, like all other intellectual attainments, require some attention to its principles, ere it can be fully understood and enjoyed. But by first learning to admire, we learn to love and then to imitate; and then to impart the same pure spirit to works of original inspiration; at least we must perceive the beauty we would rival, ere our wishes can be accomplished: — and this perception is alike necessary for the patron who would comprehend what he encourages, as for the painter who emulates the excellence he admires.

The great value of the art of painting, consists in the perfect purity and elevation of mind with which its highest efforts are conducted; its capability of aiding the pursuit of all that is

most valuable to us, in common with poetry and with science; thus usefully and largely increasing the store of amusement and pleasure required by man in relaxation of the labours incident to his necessities.

In all these points, it acts in correction of the grosser appetites of our nature; and aids in producing an amelioration of the earthly condition of man.

It may be, it has been, vilely abused! employed to strengthen vice, by imágery gross and unseemly; so also has poetry been disgraced, but no one will say that either is the less estimable on account of the base and low-bred folly of those who have thus employed them. No, the ignominy rests on the artists who have so abused and misemployed their talents; not on the arts themselves. Like the passions, which the great Author of nature has implanted in his creatures; they are excellent in their use, but in their abuse, degrading and disgusting.

Beautiful painting, like beautiful, or rather delightful music, is enchanting to the imagination. If it be good, and bear the stamp of ingenuity; skilful, and convey complete intelligence; pleasing, and present true and agreeable images to the eye, it merits our admiration! But when it pourtrays beauty, when it embodies thought, when it embraces sentiment, when it

presents concentrated feelings which awaken sympathetic emotions within us; then, it assumes that exalted character, which entitles it to our highest estimation, and justly excites us to enthusiasm! Yet, be it remembered among *us*, that if our enthusiasm arrest examination, and subdue reflection within us, we must be content with the enjoyment it affords; for vain would be the hope of improvement from it, or of our ever becoming able to rival the works we so highly admire!

LECTURE X.

ON THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF PAINTING.

1832.

LECTURE X.

ON THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF PAINTING.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the five preceding lectures, I have endeavoured to illustrate the principles on which the higher branches of the art of painting depend; and to no other subject could I with more propriety or more usefully direct your attention: for none other can be of more importance to you.

In the schools of the Royal Academy, you may learn the practice of the Art. You may there obtain skill in drawing, the knowledge of colours, and the use of them; but it is in the lecture room, that you may expect to be informed, under what regulating principles you may best employ these acquirements when obtained. That system of education which the Academy was framed to impart being thus completed, the useful application of it must depend upon your own ingenuity and industry. One difficult portion of your task will be, to know how to select

from among the principles which have been explained to you, those most applicable to your several purposes.

I have often heard with surprise and concern, admirers, and even professors of the fine arts, treat with contempt the idea of conducting the composition and execution of works of art by fixed principles, because they are so greatly dependent for their finished excellence upon taste. But I have generally observed, that those artists who were bold enough to trust to unregulated fancy, have seldom become highly renowned. During the vigour and gaiety of youth, and the exuberance of invention which not uncommonly accompanies it, they may have produced works worthy of reputation; but in after-life, the glow of imagination failing, and being without principles to guide them, they have usually fallen into repetition and inanity; the reverse of the progress of the great artists who have adopted those safeguards to their conduct. The real difficulty lies in the discovery of sound and true principles, and not in submitting to the rational governance of them when known.

That it is difficult in many cases to assign causes for our feelings, all must acknowledge. It is easier to feel in accordance with the rules by which God has disposed the powers of our minds, and directed the infinitely various organ-

isations of matter affecting our senses, than to comprehend and to explain the mode of their operation upon us. That there is order throughout the whole, that cause and effect uniformly accompany each other, we cannot doubt, seeing what we know of the developements made by the ingenuity of man of many portions of creation. There is, therefore, reason to suppose that the perfect gratification of our vision, in regard to form and colour, is founded upon immutable principles; which may, in time, be more fully comprehended than they now are.

Aristotle, in his treatise on Rhetoric, observes, "that when a speaker has fortunately hit the mark at which his discourse aimed, we may investigate and discover the causes of his success; and from the contemplation of them, derive rules of art productive of like success in all similar cases." That which is here so justly observed of eloquence, holds good in all the arts and sciences to which men have devoted their attention; and hence their gradual improvement. I have thus endeavoured, in the preceding lectures, to extract from the most effective productions of painting a knowledge of the principles of Art exemplified in their design and execution; and to explain them to you by reference to natural causes.

It is rarely by the labours of one man, or even

of many in a short time, that subtle and valuable things are invented and brought to perfection; and the rules which I have ventured to lay down, are not so much deduced from abstract reasoning, as they are the result of experience, derived through long and successive periods of exertion in the discovery of truth by the greatest painters.

An enquiry, however, naturally arises, how we are to apply the principles of art, thus derived, to our present purposes; considering, that the objects to which the practice of painting is directed amongst us are so diverse in character from those formerly employed; and the end to which they are directed, no less so. — To this I have already given, in some measure, an answer in a former lecture. "It must always be useful to be well acquainted with that which is highest and best in any art, in the practice of which we desire to excel." But as the enquiry is important to our interests as artists; and to you peculiarly so, who are on the threshold of the temple of art, prepared to dedicate your lives to its service, I will, therefore, enter into the discussion of it more at large; and endeavour to show how the good derivable from the knowledge of principles drawn from the older works to which I have referred, may be usefully employed in those humbler, yet not uninteresting classes of

painting, to the practice of which we feel that our duty, our pleasure, or our interest attaches us.

Though it be unfortunately true, as our statesmen conceive, that there exists no cause of sufficient importance to call upon us, in a national, or a religious point of view, for the most extensive exercise of the higher powers of the art of painting, nor does there, at present, appear any probability of its arising; yet were it certain that such call might never exist, it would be our best policy to maintain a constant reference to its highest principles, and its greatest productions, wherever they may be found. This is certainly the means best calculated to exalt the honour of our profession, to promote our greatest delight in the practice of it, and consequently to support our best interests. For all these purposes, and they are of no light import, we ought to keep our minds steadily fixed upon whatever is most capable of exciting the principle of genius, wherever, or in whatever degree it may exist, to the most useful and honourable exertion.

To this end I have adopted the course I have hitherto pursued. Those works to which I have referred, were, it is true, principally the offspring of religious sentiment, were devoted to religious purposes, and therefore required peculiar treat-

ment. The sacred, the solemn offices of the altar, to which painting was heretofore most actively applied, and which of necessity elevated the minds of the artists to the most dignified considerations of grandeur and of sublimity, as well as of beauty, no longer require the exertions of the pencil for their support. That great source of beauty and of excellence is withdrawn from the art, never, most probably, to return; at least, not with sufficient influence to become the leading feature in the patronage of it.

The system of religious control over the human mind, employed in Italy from the ninth to the seventeenth century, sought the aid of painting, as that of the Greeks in former days had sought the use of sculpture. Though painting enjoyed with that tasteful people an extended share of cultivation, it was not employed by them for sacred purposes: but in Rome it became almost a necessary portion of church government; and the stimulus arising from the employment of it led direct to the happy result which took place in its culture.

Here, I must again observe, nothing of the kind exists! Neither is any other national source opened to supply its loss, although it cannot be denied that there are in the studios of several of our artists works which powerfully evince talent

adequate to meet such public encouragement were it bestowed.*

But perpetual change is a great characteristic in the history of man. His passions, his feelings, and the general regulating principles of his mind, remain indeed immutable; but the growth of events provides new currents for the direction they take, and new modes for their indulgence. New modes of thought are likewise engendered

* The valuable suggestion for the employment of art stated in the following note, will be my apology for introducing it:—

I have referred, in the first historical lecture, to the use made in the temples of Ceylon, by the priests of Budhoo, of pictures representing incarnations of their deity; and the Right Honourable Sir Alexander Johnstone, in his evidence given recently before the Select Committee on the Affairs of India, has, upon proof of its value, recommended that such a plan of instruction upon other important matters should be given to the people of India.

Sir Alexander stated, that "it is known to those who have attended to the history of the Hindoos of the southern part of India, that dramatic compositions, and pictorial and sculptural representations had been used, from time immemorial, as the most efficient medium, through which moral, political, and religious instruction might be inculcated among the natives." He therefore recommended that the same plan should be pursued in endeavouring to make them comprehend the nature and benefits of a free government, and be led to the admiration of such examples of its beneficial influence, as might, by such means, be set before them: and he observed that, "if such specimens of dramatic compositions, or pictorial or sculptural representations, were prepared by British artists and writers, and sent to India, they would have the effect of raising the moral and political character of the natives, and would afford

amongst the mass of mankind in the progress of time; widely different from those entertained at former periods, and requiring different objects for their gratification, both physically and mentally. If this be true with regard to the great points upon which the existence of social life depends (and that it is, every day's experience convinces us), how much more may we expect it to operate in the less certain and less important efforts of taste!

Such change the course of time has wrought throughout Europe; and it has given a new direction to the application of taste; more especially in the practice of painting. It is a change which no efforts of ours can probably check; but which it will be wise in us, perhaps our duty, to endeavour to guide to the most useful end. The temple of religion is deserted, as far as painting is concerned, for the comparatively lighter employment of adorning the drawing or the dining room, and for the mere gratification of fancy; or, at best, the amiable

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them specimens of genius and art for their imitation. They would likewise encourage the ablest writers and artists here, to devote their talents to the extension of the moral and political improvement of 80,000,000 of their fellow subjects."

The argument thus founded, and so ingeniously urged in favour of a nation which has not attained, to any great extent, the means of acquiring knowledge by literature and science, will well bear an application, in a more refined and more philosophic mode, to our own.

indulgence of kindly affections. The condition of the art, consequently, is not now what it was, when, being an important agent in the cultivation and government of man, it was the creature of necessity; when the labourers were comparatively few, and its professors were honoured in proportion to their influence in the cause of religious zeal and enthusiasm. It is not now sought or encouraged for its utility; but having become merely the child of fancy, the necessity which cherishes it is found only in the feelings and desires of the few, who, stimulated by taste or affection, either delight in its practice or its productions. Its professors no longer enter the field of competition in the exertions of intellect amongst their fellow men upon equal terms. The amazing increase of general knowledge, the extent of scientific acquirements, the vast importance attaching to public principles; — all those powerful ties of social intercourse, are now become so widely spread, and act with such predominating power on the stage of human life, that they render the influence of the fine arts, though not unheeded, yet less immediately attractive; and deprive them largely of the attention due to their natural claim to respect. It is fit that this unpalatable truth should be known, that those who enter the career of art may be prepared to meet the difficulties they must encounter, with firmness.

Time and circumstances have wrought the change, and time and circumstances can alone re-establish that solid and useful employment of painting requisite to elevate it to the station it merits, and has heretofore proved itself so capable of supporting. During the growth of the art in Italy, and elsewhere, the artist of necessity preceded the connoisseur every step in advance; and consequently all along received his support. Every improvement in form, in colour, or expression, had the effect of novelty added to that of excellence; and hence, in every stage of his progress, the artist found reward. In this respect circumstances are indeed materially changed. As long as the more finished productions of painting, wrought under favouring auspices, remain to inform the amateur of the power of the art; the painter of history may hope for support only when he has attained a certain, and that a considerable degree of perfection. The amateur is rendered adverse to the reception or purchase, of pictures that are not in accordance with the taste he has thus acquired; whilst at the same time he demands original character of thought, and of expression.

This peculiar spirit of criticism has also in a certain degree endured its course of change; and there are some among those who delight in art, who refer to nature as the guide of their

judgment, and more properly seek for satisfaction and enjoyment in general truth with varied character, than in any specific system of imitation. And if on the one hand, it be a great loss to the art that our churches are closed to its productions; on the other, it has attained a great benefit by its release from that species of thraldom which kept it in one lengthened and overbeaten track, and prevented a more full developement of its entire power We have now in supplying the gallery or the drawing or the dining-room with congenial ornament, to employ the principles of the art in a novel manner, producing a more extended and varied use of them.

We can now no longer, with satisfaction to our employers, produce the dark and sombrous effects which we so continually find, and even admire, in the altar pictures of the Italians; and particularly in those of the school of the Caracci, and even of the Caracci themselves. That was a system which grew up with the peculiar state of the times and the country in which it originated, and was ingeniously devised to suit especial purposes; to represent the solemn, and oftentimes painful and melancholy subjects drawn from religious history. But when carried to excess it was inimical even to the object for which it was invented. Depth of tone, which it was first framed to convey, is a very different quality from

darkness, for it is compatible with brilliancy; and may be most appropriately employed on all serious subjects, which in their nature excite the deeper emotions of the mind.

The pleasure derived from pictures of a lighter class, which are not calculated to excite strong and serious feeling, but are rather fitted for ornament, and such the general taste of our country, and the purposes to which painting is now applied, principally demands; the pleasure, I say, derivable from such pictures, is owing to the perfection of the art which they exhibit, to the beauty of the imagery they present, the clearness and harmony of their colouring, the propriety and beauty of their arrangement of light and shade, and the skill with which all the peculiar qualities of the art of painting may have been employed in producing them. Just as in the lighter species of poetry, we are charmed by the maintenance of vivacity, the excellence of versification, the neatness and acuteness of humour or of emphasis, and the fulness of point; not requiring in them the high tone of epic or of tragic composition. The critic or the connoisseur in painting, may very naturally find more pleasure in one class of subjects than in another; but he ought to consider with regard to every picture, not whether it be like his own favoured style, and composed of his own favoured objects, but

whether it be a faithful transcript of nature under the circumstances intended to be represented? And if the images it presents be true and perfect in their kind, well composed, and have appropriate effect, then he may find the true object of painting obtained; and the art employed deserving of admiration.

To meet the varieties of taste thus engendered, the knowledge and the employment of the principles of art become of most extreme importance: for, though the knowledge of rules cannot impart genius, or give that power of imagination which delights in the production of novelties, it may regulate its labours, and prevent, or correct its indulgence in absurdity or extravagance, too often the result of a search after novelty. No kind of subject is above or beneath the reach of principles thus employed; and no man of sound talent will disdain the application of them, when once informed of the useful confidence they inspire.

It has been objected to this establishment of principles for the guidance of taste, that it engenders manner and a lack of variety: and so, if unwisely employed, it certainly does. But it is not a necessary, nay, not a natural consequence of it, if by manner, be meant an untrue or fictitious representation of natural objects; a substitution of artificial effects for real ones.

Sir J. Reynolds has wisely observed that "rules are trammels only to the weak;" and when such regulations are too much relied upon, when the rule, and not that point in nature on which it is founded prevails, and the artist is more intent upon exhibiting his knowledge of it than obeying the dictates of nature, then, indeed, follows that degradation of art denominated manner. But even in this case the observation of Sir Joshua is justified, for it is evident, that the genius of the artist, or the native power of his mind is not strong; that his imagination does not embrace the extent of combination of which the rules of art are capable; and that he is afraid to launch into that variously extended theatre of action, which nature, acting on unvarying principles, constantly expands to our view, and the demands of well-directed art require. From such misuse or abuse of the rules I have ventured to offer for your guidance, let me most earnestly caution you to abstain. It is true indeed, that fine art, which is the result of successive improvements in taste, cannot flow originally from system; but as Sir James Mackintosh has said of the government of mankind, and Aristotle of eloquence, it may in some measure be reduced to it.

I have before stated that the principles by which alone man can be impelled, viz., the feel-

ings and the passions implanted in his mind, are in their nature unchangeable; and to one or other of these must all efforts of the art of painting be subservient. The history of man sufficiently justifies the former part of this assertion: for we find him through all stages of his existence a creature of the same endowments, partially or more extensively developed; now swayed by one passion, now by another, as cultivation or the want of it directed. The second needs but little illustration. It were too trite to endeavour to prove that which is pointed out by common sense, viz., that to gratify men, we must adapt our efforts to their comprehension and their feelings. If, therefore, this foundation of the principles on which the successful art of the great Italian painters depends for its effect on the human mind, be true, wherefore can it be imagined that the same principles, wisely adjusted and applied, will not serve our purposes in the art, whatever be the objects or the subjects on which we employ it? The only difference between our conduct at the present time and that of former professors, under the different demands made upon each, is, that we are compelled to take less of the grand and the sublime; and be contented to employ, as we may, more of the beautiful and the pleasing. The danger we incur in pursuing this course lies in the risk of

losing a sense of the higher and the nobler qualities of art, whilst in compliance with the taste of the times we cultivate that, which, though it be of a valuable kind, yet is of far inferior quality; which, if misapplied, leads to a falsification, and in so far a deterioration of natural form and colour, in order to captivate the eye, at the expense of the heart and the understanding.

There is no denying, that to this modern art tends! I would anxiously endeavour to repress its excess; and now propose to show to you, principally from the labours of one whose name must ever be deservedly dear to all who cultivate the art of painting, that in order effectively to obtain the end we have before us, and must of necessity have, to make our works the instruments of pleasure to our employers; we may rest securely upon principles exemplified in the works of our greater predecessors.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, affords me, at once, the example and the illustration of this matter.

I will first, however, call to your recollection the peculiar principles of the grand style which Sir Joshua eulogised and recommended. They are, careful selection from the works of nature in all those objects which you desire to imitate; simplicity and grandeur in the style in which you imitate them; breadth of effect, purity and simplicity in colouring; and freedom in execution. There evidently can be nothing in these princi-

ples adverse to the sensible treatment of any kind of subject.

We enjoy great pleasure in regarding a well wrought picture of still life, even of the images of things that are not of the most agreeable kind; and which, naturally, rather excite disgust than delight. This pleasure arises from the gratification our eyes receive from the arrangement and union of colours, from forms pleasing to our vision in their shapes, or their proportions, from an agreeable choice of illumination, or from the softness and the dexterity exhibited in the execution of the work. The ingenuity and taste of the painter having, in these points, improved upon the casual effects under which we usually view such objects; the impression which the surface of the picture is capable of making upon our sight, is the same, as if it were composed of others, less naturally offensive. We therefore willingly enjoy the pleasure thus offered to our minds, through the medium of our vision; the only sense concerned in regarding such picturesque combinations.

The like choice, the like perfection of forms, the like union of colours, and selection of light and shade skilfully arranged, form the basis of all that is most enchanting to the eye in pictures representing scenes and objects the most interesting to our minds. These are the points on

which depends the beau-ideal of the art, and not on an abandonment of nature. When this mode of reasoning and proceeding is employed, it will be foreseen that its product must be an ideal beauty or perfection in the forms and colours and effect of the things represented, which can be rarely seen in the natural objects; and still less rarely if ever, in such perfect combination. Ideal beauty then, or style, or the grand style if you will, as I have stated in my lecture on design, does not consist in exaggerated proportions of body and limbs, like many of those of Parmigiano, or exaggerated colours like those of J. Romano, and the lower class of the Roman school; nor in affected actions styling themselves graceful. It is not in such mistaken notions that the sensible artist will indulge his imagination. It was not with such views, that Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his discourses, recommended style and ideal beauty; though there are those who imagine, that to adopt them is to proceed out of the bounds of nature, and who doubt the truth of assertions arising from experience! This is owing to their not having penetrated the actual intention of the writer! Wanting the peculiar feeling and experience of the artist, they frame to themselves some idea of their own, concerning his intention when he speaks of style of which the fallacy is apparent; and thence, they argue on the unfounded and erroneous opinions which

guide the conduct of painters, and talk of nature as the only guide, and perfect imitation as the only good. It is thus they arrive at the truth, without comprehending the whole truth. The argument is specious, the truism it contains apparent: but this difference lies between the ingenious and sensible artist, and the critic; viz., that when all the study of nature to which the text of the critic leads is obtained, and the whole of it may with industry and an ordinary degree of talent be obtained; then, and not till then, the true art, that art which can alone exalt the artist to high estimation, in whatever way he employs his talent, commences; the art of selection, the art of adaptation, and the art of combination: the skill, the principle, by which he sees and comprehends what is best to be employed; and the fittest mode of applying it.

It will at once be apparent, that this implies selection of form, of colour, of effect, of character, and of expression. If the model employed present it not, the imagination of the painter, acting upon the probabilities or the possibilities of nature, must supply it. Hence have arisen the diversities of taste in designing the human figure; and hence also the ill-founded objections which have been made to the painter's theory. Yet this is the end, to the perfection of which all true artists aspire; and are justified by reason

as well as taste in their endeavours. It is too true, indeed, as might well be expected in so nice and difficult a matter, that such excessive aspiration after beauty and power has frequently led to the commission of great mistakes; but be it remembered, that it has also conducted some able artists very near to perfection.

By the wise, no overthrow of nature is intended, no subversion of her laws, no change of her principles is desired by those who pursue the high object of fine art pure in spirit, and desirous of obtaining real excellence. They but seek to display her to perfection, to take her in her most efficient mood, to show the most perfect of her forms, the most pure and lovely of her colours, and the extremest beauty of her effects; as best suited to impress sentiment, and render art the rival of her power. There is no other way in which the painter can contend with the influence of nature, having to display in one view, and under one momentary effect, those things which in nature are seen under infinite diversities of light, and shade, and colour; relieving, absorbing, contrasting, or uniting them in perpetual change.

The love and the admiration of the works of nature and of art, are natural to the human mind; but their beauties are discerned and felt in very different degrees among the different classes of mankind. Persons of lower rank are in

general sensible of them only when pointed out by others; whilst amongst the cultivated portion of society, a sense of those beauties becomes an absorbing passion of the mind.

In the productions of nature, the Almighty fiat has gone forth, and the world stands before us in its simplicity, its beauty, and its majesty — we see, we admire, and we adore! The myriads of living beings with which it teems, wonderful in the beauty and variety of their structure, the lofty mountain, the expanded sea, the varying sky, are objects which impress us at once with admiration and delight. But are there no combinations of form in the mountain, the sky, and the ocean, or in the living creatures that inhabit them, more beautiful, more magnificent, more majestic than others, uniting all the force of the great qualities of each in greater perfection; exciting within us more powerful emotion, more pleasing rapture, more solemn awe, and greater adoration of the great Creator? Every mountain is not beautiful in form — every troubled sky is not pleasing to the view, nor are we always gratified with the appearance of the sea, or the aspects of animals. We learn by observation to separate the pleasing from the unpleasing in such objects: yet all is nature, and the representations of all ought, according to the common-place theory to delight us.

Just in such variety are the products of the art of painting; which without losing sight of natural character, selects or rejects, as best answers the purpose required. Hence originates the beau-ideal of the painter. The power to choose is the privilege he demands, the necessity by which he is urged, the ne plus ultra of his desire.

Taste to discern and separate from common appearances the more exalted beauties of nature, as well as of art, is not an intuitive gift to man: he must acquire it by observation and contemplation. Some few, indeed, there have been, who highly favoured by Providence, are endowed with qualities of mind fitting them for a more speedy perception of truth than the generality of mankind; and their early exhibition of that perception seems to contradict the assertion I have made. But the rarity of the aptitude to display it, proves such examples to be but exceptions from the general rule. That it requires cultivation to know when the best choice is made, and the most perfect display of it by painting, ought not surely to be a startling proposition, or one to which a sensible mind can withhold assent. The public may be pleased with natural objects they know not why, and care not wherefore, as Sterne would have his critic be with his writings; but that is not a text to be adopted by an artist; to

him it must be more pleasing, and more satisfactory and useful, to know why or wherefore it is that a scene affords him either pain or pleasure. No man however obtains that knowledge without study. It is comparison alone which teaches it.

It cannot be, that the poets who have made their dwellings among the mountains of Westmoreland and Cumberland, and are more conversant than others with the varied effects of sun and shower and fog, of the sunbeam, or the moonlight on the grand forms around them, and which they have contemplated in all the varied effects produced amongst such scenes by natural causes: it cannot be, I say, that men so circumstanced are not more susceptible of the various degrees of beauty thus exhibited to them, than others who are less accustomed to behold and contemplate those glorious works of Omnipotence! There is but little strength then in the argument which has been urged against the select principle of admiration, declaring that it is not necessary for men to learn to admire the beauties or the grandeur of nature; if we find that more intimate acquaintance with its variety and powers, increases our sense of its perfections.*

* "Truth," says Goethe, "like the Deity from whom it emanates, doth not show itself directly: we must seek it in its

It is thus with taste in art. Remark its progress. How very slight a degree of imitation sufficed at first to gratify men. Conceive the very imperfect work of Cimabue carried in triumphant procession to its destined place, the Church of St. Maria Novella at Florence. Imperfect as it is, except in thought and intention, yet it was regarded almost as a miracle; because it surpassed the pictures then customarily seen, and uncultivated eyes were insensible of its defects. This did not take place at a time when extreme ignorance prevailed in Italy; it was when Dante wrote, when philosophical discussion began to prevail, and many men, among the clergy particularly for whom such pictures were painted, distinguished themselves by learned literary research. Greater honour was never conferred on the art of painting! Men are not then intuitively judges of fine art, since so poor a performance as that must be considered, in comparison with later productions, could excite them so highly to esteem it. As the painters extended and improved their practice finer works were gradually produced, and imitation became more

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manifestations." And Lord Erskine observes in his Armata, that when Truth breaks in too suddenly on those unprepared to receive it, it confounds the understanding; as vision is overpowered by a sudden burst of light.

perfect; till at length, after a lapse of 200 years, it could be carried no farther. But the estimation it publicly bore, rose not in equal ratio; it could not; the extreme of praise had been bestowed; which could but be continued, not enlarged.

Its very culture, however, taught the world what might be expected from it. The mountain, the cloud, and the sea, were imitated to perfection, but did not satisfy the cravings of the sensitive mind after expression; after that perfect and appropriate selection and happy combination of forms and colours, which was most capable of impressing the mind with the greatest degree of power: long felt, but not effected in painting. The void was filled by Raffaelle and M. Angelo; and the rule was completed, where human form and expression were concerned, when Raffaelle introduced beautiful variety and depth of composition, with graceful truth and beauty of expression; and M. Angelo crowned the effect in the progress of the art, by carrying both form and expression almost to an excess of grandeur and sublimity.

This rule may be varied in its application, but must ever remain true and influential, however applied. Its effects must be seen to be truly known; and it has so rarely been exhibited by others, that well may teachers of the art refer to

those great men, all who would enquire of them the true road to excellence in painting.*

It does not, consequently, follow, that every man practising the art of painting should copy Raffaelle or M. Angelo. Each may apply the principles they teach, according to their apprehension of their utility, in all and every branch of the art, as Sir Joshua did most admirably in his own. He was by that enabled to produce the great and original works which give, justly give, immortality to his name; leaving far behind him all the portrait painters who had preceded him in this country: not excepting, in a great many instances, even Vandyke.

I have entered thus far into the principle on which the true character of the discourses of Sir J. Reynolds is founded, and the feelings under which they must have been written in all that relates to the grand style in art, as a point worthy of reflection, before I proceed to show how truly his pictures correspond with the doctrines he inculcated.

* I must here repeat, that unfortunately the prints we have from Michel Angelo's pictures, even those engraved by Volpato, as well as those published under the exclusive authority of the Papal Government, with all the interest with which despotic power invests them, are discreditable to Roman art. They are incorrectness and weakness personified, in comparison with the exactness, and strength, of the originals: and afford very unsatisfactory knowledge of the perfection of their true qualities.

I will not, in my present enquiry, enter upon the consideration of those points in art which he drew from Rembrandt, they are apparent, and acknowledged by all; but shall confine myself to the illustration of those to which I have already alluded, and which he gathered from the Italians.

He was ever intent upon obtaining principles for his guidance. He writes to Barry, "The Cappella Sistina is the production of the greatest genius that ever was employed in the arts: it is worth minding by what principles that stupendous greatness of style is produced, and endeavouring to produce something of your own on those principles."

It may fairly be doubted, whether his native talent, strong as his early works exhibit it, would have carried him so completely to the perception of that which constitutes fine art, the entire display of expressive character, had he not travelled to Italy, and seen with a philosophic eye the works of Raffaelle and M. Angelo, of Titian and Coreggio; who had themselves wrought with the progressive excellence of previous and well-directed art to conduct them.

That Reynolds was wisely sensible of the utter impropriety of applying the generalising rule, so necessary for the historical painter, too freely in portraiture, is evident from his stating,

that "it would be ridiculous for a portrait painter to despise the subordinate qualities of the art:" and he adds in another place, "that it is not sufficient that a work be learned, it must be pleasing; the painter must add grace to strength, if he desire to secure the first impression in his favour. "Our taste," he adds, "has a kind of sensuality about it as well as love of the sublime, and both these qualities of the mind are to have their proper consequence, as far as they do not counteract each other: for that is the grand error, which much care ought to be taken to avoid:" and again; "I am of opinion that the ornamental style, which I cautioned you against considering as a principal, may not be wholly unworthy the attention of those who aim even at the grand style, when it is properly placed and reduced."

He could not, therefore, altogether treat his portraits as those grand figures of Prophets and Sibyls painted by M. Angelo on the walls of a place consecrated to divine worship, and for an especial and holy purpose, were treated. He could not imitate those works he so praised, when his art was of necessity employed upon less important matter; and fitted to adorn the drawing room of a private house, instead of the temple of our Maker. But having contemplated those astonishing productions, which had received the homage of the world for 150 years, he became

able to comprehend the source of the influence they produced upon the minds of sensible observers, and more immediately upon his own. The result was a firm conviction, that this influence was owing to the grand style in which they were conceived and drawn, to the breadth and simplicity of their light and shade, and to the beauty with which they were composed; united to their intensity and unaffected fulness and clearness of expression in action and feature. The same mode of reflection and application will lead us to conclude, that with like effect he studied the works of Raffaelle; and that he gives us, in his Lectures, the real feelings of his mind while he regarded those works. He could not make single figures act like combined ones; but he could employ the same justness of thought, the same propriety, the same unity, the same fulness of expression, the same grace and taste, which are so eminently the glory of Raffaelle.

Hence was framed and confirmed in the mind of Sir Joshua, that main and important principle of grandeur and simplicity with grace and energy, which he has so laudably eulogised and enforced. His observations on the ideal treatment of portraits corresponds with this. "If a portrait painter," he says, "is desirous to raise and improve his subject, he has no other means than by approaching it to a general idea. He leaves

out all the minute breaks and peculiarities in the face, and changes the dress from a temporary fashion to one more permanent, which has annexed to it no idea of meanness from its being familiar to us."

This is one main and important principle which Sir Joshua found presented to his mind completely developed in the antique statues, and in the works of Michel Angelo and Raffaelle; and in this respect a similarity exists between fine poetry and fine painting.

The style of Pindar, or of Homer, but more particularly of the former, wherein all that is grand in nature is brought into effect, and that which is little or mean is omitted, is still strictly natural. The motions of waves, or of clouds, are not minutely pursued as they course each other, till the imagination surfeits and the reader is wearied as he pursues the idea of the poet. The countenances of the gods, as they applaud or condemn the actions of men, the zeal and glow of the racer as he courses to the goal, or the activity and the heat of his horses, are not delineated with the minuteness of the ordinary poet who trusts to extreme exactness of imitation for the admiration of men; once drawn forth in the greatest of their qualities, once impressed on the imagination by the true image which characterises each thing or person, the aim of the

poet is fulfilled. This remark is confirmed by Dr. Johnson, when describing the sensation which actuated Rasselas when he became a poet. "The object of a poet," he says, "is to exhibit, in his portrait of nature, such permanent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind; and he must neglect the minute discriminations which one may have remarked, and another neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and to carelessness."

That such selection is easy to effect in painting with all the clearness which may impress a common observer, like the mountain, the troubled sky, or the mighty sea, in nature, is far too much to expect from human ability, practising an art, the difficulty, if not the value of which, the world may be disposed to acknowledge. By how many poets or writers, as well as painters, has this all-important principle of selection been attained? How many have become absurd or bombastic, who have attempted it? How few, how very few, are those who have succeeded! The absurdities of most of the descriptions, the imperfections of the imitations, the falsely enthusiastic accounts of the works of Michel Angelo which have been published, have placed him, in the minds of many, among these bombastic aspirants after exalted fame; and thus have arisen mistaken notions of his power, as

well as of his intentions. It is the want of real information in the mass of critics who have written concerning him, (without perhaps having seen his best productions,) which has led the world, and the critics themselves, to the mistaken conclusion, that Sir Joshua Reynolds did not feel the force of many of his own observations concerning the works of Michel Angelo. That he did not maintain union between his precepts and his practice; but that, while he talked of Angelo and Raffaelle, as the main springs of polished art, he himself adopted the Venetian style in preference in his paintings. It is fair to ask those, who in such remarks characterise the mind of Reynolds with weakness, or something worse, whence they conceive arose the extraordinary breadth, the selection and the beauty of form, which is displayed in his pictures; whence the strength, and exactitude of his expressions, or the identity of his portraits; and whence the masses of light and dark combined with so much grace, and such just relief of the prominent and important parts? The three former are the just attributes of Michel Angelo and of Raffaelle, and are not to be found in the Venetian school, except in the works of Titian: the latter, of Coreggio, and Rembrandt — but in Rembrandt not always. Nothing whatever could be found of these es-

sential qualities of fine art, so difficult to perceive or to attain, in the pictures which he had contemplated at home as his guide, except in Vandyke's. Imitations of the common-place forms of objects, or the absurdities and negligences of Kneller, were the theme of delight to artists and amateurs, at the time that Reynolds began his course as an artist; and the former were sanctioned even at Rome, in the popular labours of the favourite portrait painter there, Battoni. All that was excellent in art he had to learn, as he himself acknowledged; and so much is man the child of imitation, that there are not many who begin to think and practise an art, without following some favoured guide in the examples of the day. For myself, after having endeavoured to obtain by attentive and earnest examination, a just sense of the value of the works of the extraordinary man whom Sir Joshua has so nobly and justly eulogised, and given long consideration to the works of the eulogist, I do not feel at liberty to doubt the sincerity of his declared opinions on the subject; and firmly believe, that we owe much that we admire in the labours of our great progenitor in art, to the power of the principles he drew from the paintings in the Sistine Chapel. When these are added to the beauty and grace of expression given by Raffaelle in his works in the Vatican; and the

purity and texture of colour which are seen in the works of Coreggio at Parma, we have the prototypes of the main excellencies of Reynolds in all that relates to grandeur, grace, and taste.

But as the bee in the garden of nature, draws from each flower the delicious stores of his hive, so he gathered sweets from every plant in the garden of art; amalgamating them in his own skilful mental laboratory, to that degree of perfection which gives him a station among the most able painters, and entitles him to our grateful admiration.

Had he remained at home, guided by his own reflections, he might, perchance, towards the close of a long life of arduous practice, have discovered the necessity of resorting to the use of such principles as those of which I have spoken: but by his journey to Italy, he learned the lesson in time to employ it advantageously, and has recorded his sense of it for our improvement.

If any one still doubt the necessity and the use of well-regulated principles in composing and painting pictures, and thinks that by fancy and dexterity of hand in imitation he may effect it, let him attentively regard the works produced for our exhibitions; and then see, as he often may see, the greatest dexterity employed to no avail. Let him then contemplate the works of Reynolds, and see wherein they differ

from others, that have far more direct and close imitation of natural objects, even in the features of a face: he will then perceive, that though the same objects most probably presented themselves to the different painters alike, in form, in colour, and effect: yet the one, guided only by the actual thing before him, has merely given a correct and skilful imitation of it, indifferently accompanied, and ill connected with its ground; while the other, extending his views to that ideal grace which renders art agreeable, knowing the rules on which he may depend in order to render imitation most effective, employed his hand under more philosophic guidance. While the work so produced presents a welcome degree of imitation of the characters of objects, which fails not to bring the recollection of them to the mind; the artist has added, by his knowledge of art, a charm, a fascination to it, which no mere imitation ever attained: the cause of which, nourished by style, cannot be understood by the unexperienced or the uncultivated, however sensible they may be of its power.

It was this knowledge alone, acquired by the instrumentality of which he himself has told us, that enabled Sir Joshua to overcome the enormities of the dress of his time, with which his taste had to combat; and which withstood all

other painters of the day, except those who learned of him. His taste, his judicious employment of the higher principles of the art, could alone enable him to render even pleasing the most untoward compounds of form in dress that were ever seen in any civilised country: sometimes by blending them with the ground, sometimes by uniting other forms with them, and so shaping a mass agreeable to his taste; always giving grace by beauty of line and delicacy of colour in the execution of the painting. By such means, and also by contrasting colours, or by blending a given colour with others of the like kind, expedients over which he appears to have had a ready and perfect mastery, he succeeded in that arduous and difficult task.

These expedients, known only to the accomplished and skilful artist, were often the result of constant reference in mind to the fine works which he had studied; and they not unfrequently remind the well-informed observer of their sources, though the beauty of their combination belongs to the painter.

The instructions he has so constantly enforced in his discourses upon the subject on which I now address you, can only mislead the superficial. But it is not the teacher's fault if the pupil be incapable of applying his remarks. He only is to be blamed, who inculcates other than the best

principles; and those can be drawn only from the best sources. There, should the student be directed to resort, not to acquire original power, for that neither man nor the labour of man is qualified to impart; but to learn how best to apply and to improve that which is given to him. It cannot be wrong to conduct a youth to the knowledge of the greatest heights of perfection which have been attained by others. If he cannot maintain himself amid the blaze of excellence he finds there, if it confound his understanding and bewilder his imagination, if he become dizzy in the contemplation of the grand and delightful scene around him, let him descend, and take a lower station better suited to his perceptions. But if Genius have any share in his nature, even there, in the station of his choice, he may, by retaining some recollection of the inspiring vision he has beheld, give a zest to the humbler scenes in which he may indulge; and add energy to his representations of the visions of his fancy, of whatever nature, above the vulgar, they may be.

Observe the mode of study adopted by Sir Joshua when in Rome, or elsewhere, which he has stated to us in various parts of his memoranda and discourses. He gave but little time to copying, and much to thought; intent upon obtaining, not that particular knowledge

required by the connoisseur, concerning the mode or manner of touch which distinguishes the productions of able painters, though that he did not altogether neglect; but earnestly exerting his mind in endeavours to attain knowledge of a much more important nature; viz. that of the causes of the peculiar effects produced upon his mind by the great works he studied; and he gives us the wise and sufficient reasons which led him to adopt this mode of proceeding. After the examination of the best pictures, he says, "the benefit to be derived from them is, to draw such conclusions as may serve in future as fixed rules of practice: taking care not to be amused with trifles, but to learn to regard the excellencies only." "The industry which I principally recommend is, not that of the hand, but that of the mind; for practice, though essential to perfection, can never attain that to which its aim is directed, unless it work under the guidance of principle." So strongly was this important point imprinted on his mind, that he thought it worthy of frequent repetition, which I need not state to you, but recommend to your research throughout his admirable discourses. I will but add one more, which is impressed with increased force. "We must not," he says, "content ourselves with merely admiring and relishing, we

must enter into the principles on which a work is wrought. Art in its perfection is not ostentatious; it is hid, and works its effect itself unseen. An artist must find out the latent causes of conspicuous beauties, and from thence form principles for his own conduct." Such were the admirable and useful precepts which governed the mind of this rare artist: and under the control of such wise maxims, exhibiting the solid and judicious genius of the man who wrote them, did he study the works of Raffaelle and Michel Angelo. We know that he spent many months in the Capella Sistina, but there are no copies by him existing of the works he saw there, at least I do not know of them. In the same mode he devoted his time largely to the chambers of the Vatican. There, however, he also employed himself in copying parts of the pictures by Raffaelle; but such labours are few, considering the length of time he was in Rome.*

His mode of study at Venice, where the luxuries of the art are exhibited rather than its strength, is given to us in one of his original and valuable notes to Mason's translation of the poem of Du Fresnoy, and must be familiar to most of you. You there see his principle of

* One of his copies, that of the St. Michael by Guido, is now in the King's collection.

critical enquiry practically exemplified: a search after example, to establish a rule. In like manner, or rather following the same guidance, reading pictures as it were, and as he advises other artists to do, did he employ himself during his residence in Italy: and having discovered the secret of those who enchanted the world, he returned to exemplify it in his own productions, wherever propriety permitted him to do so.*

The interesting influence of perfections thus acquired is admirably exhibited to us in that master-work of pathos, his picture of the suffering Ugolino, with his innocent and unhappy children. No work of Angelo or Raffaelle, the acknowledged painters of sentiment, is more full, or more true in expression. Had Raffaelle himself, in his best time, painted the two figures of the unfortunate Count and his youngest son, his Anselmo, I do not say that we should have had

* The ultimate object of the researches made by Sir J. Reynolds when abroad, may be exemplified by an anecdote related to me by Sir A. Hume. They were travelling together on the road to Hertford, when the attention of Sir Joshua was suddenly attracted to a board over a farrier's shop, on which was written, "*Horses shod here, agreeable to Nature, and according to Art.*"—"Who is the sensible man who keeps that shop?" exclaimed he, "or who has supplied him with so wise an inscription? It expresses in a few words the summit of perfection, the grand desideratum in every art and science."

the same composition, but we should have beheld in it the dictates of the same mind, and the exertion of the same hand. These two figures are, in every respect regarding the principles of the art of painting, save the execution of the hair and beard of the father, similar to the angelic messengers from heaven driving Heliodorus from the Temple. We see the same intensity of feeling, regulated by the purest and most elevated thought; the same precision of expression, the same breadth of effect, and the same simplicity of handling. Indeed, the whole picture is wrought on principles like those employed by Raffaelle and Michel Angelo; viz. avoiding all unimportant matter, and all trifling parts in imitation, with severe but unaffected feeling of expression; and with that great breadth of management which Raffaelle drew from Angelo, and first exhibited in the fine picture of the Heliodorus, to which I have before referred.

It is now too late, perhaps, to enquire whether this perfect congruity of style was the happy result of strong native feeling in the minds of each: but when Reynolds tells us that when he first beheld it in the Vatican he was unconscious of its value, or its excellence, and had no pleasure in it, till after long observation he had learned to comprehend its truth; and when afterwards, we find the value of it so established

in his sensible mind, that he recommends to others, when about to begin an important work, to consider how Raffaelle or Michel Angelo would have treated the subject, and he himself producing like things; when we see this, we have no right to say, that he had not acquired the knowledge of the style from the works wherein he saw it; or that "the language of his lectures and the painting of his pictures have no accord." In this picture of Ugolino we see the adoption of the principle, not a copy of the works from which he derived it, but applied with the utmost freedom of originality; and, superadded to it, taste and adornment derived from other sources; qualities of effect and colour surpassing in hue and in harmony all with which Michel Angelo and Raffaelle appeared to have been acquainted.

This fine picture, which is at Knowle, and may at any time be seen, — this alone would sufficiently prove, to all competent judges of the true nature and quality of the highest and best application of fine art, that Reynolds spoke in his lectures, when Michel Angelo and Raffaelle were his theme, in perfect correspondence with the spirit which governed his practice; whenever and wherever he could apply it with propriety. Even in his own peculiar branch of art, portraiture, we see the same principles governing his practice. It is most perfectly

exemplified in the portrait of Dr. Johnson, painted for Thrale, and now in the possession of Sir Robert Peel. In the treatment of that picture, we see the same selection of characteristic parts, (of both the countenance and the figure,) the same breadth of marking, the same attention to expression in action and in look; showing that the mind of the man was the object of research, in preference to the mere imitation of the body or the features, of which much is omitted. Had they been minutely imitated or copied, the attention of both the painter and the observer would necessarily have been abstracted from the mental image which is now presented to us of that great ornament of our literature. I trust there are but few among you who would be glad of the exchange, nor any, who conceive that the exchange, as it now stands, so much in our favour, was effected at a cheap purchase. The difficulty attending the selection necessary to produce such interesting effect, can only be overcome by the clearest perception of what is right, and the steadiest resolution to pursue it; by good sense, by pure taste, and by sound judgment: it is at variance with the common views and feelings of men in relation to portraiture, and is the result of the most extreme refinement of mind. Whenever this refinement of taste is employed, all are pleased with the

result; except, perhaps, those who ought to be best pleased with it, relations and intimate friends. They ever, and very naturally it must be acknowledged, being uninformed of the best object of art, seek for the exact representation of the external image of the person whom they regard with affection: notwithstanding that, for the most part, that affection is founded upon the invisible qualities of the mind. They are not aware that, when they exact of the painter a minute attention to the former and less important portion of the man, they endanger the latter; and increase the risk of failure in the attempt to delineate moral character; which, if effected, would ultimately produce to them, as it never fails to do to others, more lasting and sensible enjoyment.

The portrait of Lord Heathfield with the keys of the fortress of Gibraltar in his hands, is another proof of the adaptation of the higher principles of the art to the purposes of Portraiture; giving it a claim to rank with history in Painting.

The picture of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse is another and even more decisive proof of the entire accord between his disclosed principles, and his practice; illustrating the sense he had acquired of the rules to be adopted in treat-

ing subjects of poetic and pathetic character, combined with portraiture.*

To prove the utility of the application of the principles of the Grand Style of art to the practice of portraiture, was the object I had in view when I began this lecture; and I hope that what has been said, may have inspired in your minds a consciousness of the truth of the assertion. Were more necessary to convince you that the great beauty we all so much admire in the paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds is mainly owing to it, I might refer you to the style of design, composition, and treatment of the portrait of the munificent Patron and Founder of the Royal Academy, George the Third; to the picture of the family of the Duke of Marlborough; to that of the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord Ashburton, and Colonel Barré; and, indeed, to innumerable others: for the

* It is very well known that he frequently adopted actions of figures from the designs of others; and I had imagined that he had taken a hint from the Isaiah of Michel Angelo as the basis of his figure of Mrs. Siddons, making a graceful modification of it; but she told me that it was the production of pure accident. Sir Joshua had begun the head and figure in a different view and action, but while he was occupied in the preparation of some colour, she changed her position, to look at a picture hanging on the wall of the room: when he again looked at her, and saw the action she had taken, he requested her not to move; and thus arose the beautiful and expressive figure we now see in the picture.

impulse under which he sought for guidance is, to my mind, apparent through almost all the portraits he painted after his return from Italy, of both sexes, and of all ages. Nay, sometimes he pressed the generalising principle too far; and we sigh for a little more of the definition of form and feature, which we see in the works of Titian and Vandyke: and again, there are others, which the skill of no one ever surpassed; and to which the addition of more minutiæ would have been destruction.

Portraiture, to render it perfect, has need of all the refinements of art that can be bestowed upon it; but, having its peculiar disadvantages to contend with, it cannot adopt, with the complete freedom of historical painting, the perfect principle of selection and adaptation. It requires, however, the knowledge of the whole, justly to employ a portion; and this gives to such a portrait painter as Sir Joshua Reynolds, a title to rank with the highest names in art. There are, in the practice of portraiture, difficulties to be overcome in the painter's own view of what is right, and independent of the obstruction arising from the very natural private individual feelings to which I have alluded, which compensate in great measure for the lesser call it makes upon the imagination. If that be less than is required by history, the necessity of giving resemblance and

refinement in the treatment of it, the feeling of character, and truth, and delicacy of expression, keep the fancy of the painter ever in requisition in an equal degree; and grace and taste are in greater demand by it. Whoever considers these points with reference to perfect portraiture, will listen with indifference, if not with contempt, to the degrading and unjust remarks which have been too often repeated concerning it.

Let me caution you against being deluded and led away by any one, however ingenious, if unpractised in the art, from a full belief in the opinions expressed and the doctrines inculcated by so distinguished an artist as Sir Joshua Reynolds. The experience on which such men as he found their sentiments, gives to those sentiments, when they are induced to impart them, a legitimate stamp of the greatest value. Instead of doubting their truth, when on a first reading you do not understand them, rather doubt your own judgment. Peruse them again and again (as he did, if I may so say, the works of Raffaelle), and apply the instruction they convey with implicit credence. Your faith will be rewarded in the end, by an improvement of your intellectual power: as your practice enlarges and your judgment ripens, you will attain to the understanding of many things which at first appeared to you problematical.

All subjects of an abstruse nature, such as grandeur of style, or purity, or strength of expression, are in their nature difficult to explain. The more refined such qualities are,— the nearer they approach to perfection, by those gradual and almost imperceptible degrees by which the good merges in the grand, and at length becomes paramount to all other things of the like kind,— the greater is the extent of taste requisite to comprehend them, or fully to enjoy them; and still more to inspire others with a just sense of their value.

An able man, fully comprehending the subject on which he writes, may fancy that he has rendered it sufficiently clear, knowing, as he does, the whole import of that which he has written: while those who have to learn the nature of the lesson intended to be conveyed to them, may require much more elucidation ere they can comprehend it. Sir Joshua seems to have been aware of this himself; for one of his Lectures (the fourth) was written to diminish the risk of misapprehension, by the students, of the principles asserted in the previous one.

No one, who had so much reputation to lose by an exposition of unsound principles in the art he practised, as Sir Joshua Reynolds, would venture to publish or to write concerning it, without the deepest consideration of which he was

capable; and that he was capable of much and wise consideration appears in his works. Neither was he one of those who seek to draw upon themselves the regard of men, by bold and confident declarations of opinions, on slight foundations, and upon difficult subjects; risking the chance of detection, rather than lose the renown given to the appearance of talent.

Painting, practised as it was practised and employed by this great and illustrious artist, was plainly proved, as I have often asserted it to be, the product of mental more than manual labour. And I shall close the remarks which I have thought it useful and necessary to have made concerning him and his productions, by saying, once more, that, when such a painter applies his mental power to explain the nature of the governing principles which guide him in the exercise of his art, and to impart his reflections upon them; you may rest assured, that they are well worthy of your humblest and most devoted attention and belief; at least, till experience has enabled you fully to appreciate what he has said, or led you to the knowledge of something better.

The opinions which I have ventured to express concerning the labours of Sir Joshua Reynolds in painting and in literature, differ, I know, from those expressed by some intelligent men. I have satisfied my own mind concerning their

truth, or I should not have offered them to your consideration. Nevertheless, I must own, that it is difficult to avoid being biassed on such matters by our own peculiar studies, or seeing favourably whatever may bear an interpretation in consonance with our own feelings. Sensible of the danger I may have incurred of committing this error, I request you to examine for yourselves; prove, by your own impartial perusal and experience, whether I am right or wrong. It is a point well worthy of your deepest consideration, and you will be gainers by the enquiry. If it be true, that so great and skilful a painter as Sir Joshua Reynolds knew not how to employ the principles he taught; where may we hope to find the man who can? And if he were capable of inculcating those which he did not feel to be just and useful, in whose breast may we seek for honour or honesty? If, on the other hand, conscious of their truth, he did employ them in his own peculiar practice in painting, then my instruction to you, to cultivate the knowledge of the principles founded on the practice of the great masters, and the assurance which I give you, that they may be advantageously employed in other than historical art, is fully justified.

That which this great man so effectually displayed in portraiture, was made equally efficient

in landscape, by another painter, of whom our country may reasonably be proud,—Wilson.

Who! having the slightest perception of sentiment in works of art, can be otherwise than delighted with the beauty of his productions! Who! on regarding his best pictures, does not feel that, in them, he views nature exhibited under favourable circumstances; divested of all which might impede the full action of those nobler and better thoughts, which fine landscape is capable of inspiring; that dignity and beauty are spread, where a common-minded artist would have imparted meanness or common-place, and have damped or extinguished those better thoughts!

Now, enquire whence the charm that works so powerfully upon us arises; consider what it is upon which this abstraction of mind in an observer from all that is vulgar and unenchanting, depends. You will find the result of your enquiry to be, a consciousness that the employment of the very same principles of art to which I have directed your attention, is the operative cause. The same system, of choice of materials, of selection of character rather than individuality, of omission of trivialities in imitation, of breadth and of simplicity, have been the guides of the artist; so that you find those principles which lead historical painting to its greatest

degree of perfection promoting the like great and beneficial end in landscape as in portraiture.

Carry onwards the enquiry as you will, even down to caricatura, the truth of the assertion will be found to prevail, and the triumph of principles, and of system, will be made perfect.

Here, Gentlemen, I close this course of lectures; and now, let me address a few words to you as a friend rather than as a master.

I have shown to you how multifarious are the objects to the study of which the mind of a painter is of necessity compelled; and since so few of those who have anxiously sought to attain perfection of taste and science in art have presented it to view, we must conclude that it is extremely difficult to effect, and requires the exertion of no light portion of intellect.

The endeavour to comprehend its perfection may perplex him most at the outset, who is most capable of attaining the knowledge of it in the end. The superficial and the vain soon fancy they see the depths of science or of art, and with security applaud or condemn; and rush towards the end, ere they have obtained a steady knowledge of the way, or of the means. But the modest and sensible youth will hesitate ere he determines on the quality of the great and re-

nowned examples that are set before him; and will labour, with caution and humility, to make sure every step of his progress, that he may arrive at the end of his course in security.

Let me request you to recollect, during your progress, that the advice of the most able teacher can do little without the most zealous co-operation of the pupil.

The intelligent and accomplished artist is not to be formed by precept alone; though, doubtless, by such means, judiciously applied, his judgment may be assisted, and his taste refined. It is, however, chiefly by his practical labours, by the active exertions of his own hand and mind, that he can wisely hope to make any sensible or important progress in his profession. I therefore most earnestly request you to take good heed in the regulation of your conduct. Much may be done here, in the public schools; but more, much more, in your private studies. Here you may collect many useful precepts and materials; but it is in private, in the solitude of study, that they are to be tried, and brought into actual service.

It is true, that the materials of which you are in search in the Royal Academy can be fixed in your minds, only by imitation of the works of others; but when a sufficient fund of knowledge and power has been amassed, to enable you to

begin your independent labours with a promise of security, the mere imitative habit should either be much relaxed, or altogether suspended: as, in that stage of your studies, it would retard rather than facilitate your progress. While the habit is continued of soliciting aid from others, or from external sources, you not only neglect to call into action your native or internal stores, but the very power escapes by which you may be enabled to avail yourselves of them; and by which alone a lofty character of reputation can be established for the future, upon a firm and honourable basis.

One point more I would lay before you, for your consideration. It does not affect your studies, or your power as artists, but your reputation as men, and is worthy of your regard.

It is not unfrequently, though somewhat unkindly, and often unjustly, said, that men become great artists without much intellectual power; and, perhaps, there is some foundation for the remark in many cases, if the want of general knowledge be considered as a proof of it.

But intellectual power may adorn the mind of a man, who, absorbed in the pursuit of one favourite object, and succeeding in the attainment and finding great pleasure in the practice of it, may not have either leisure, or inclination,

to turn his thoughts to others; and great success in the practice of an art, which has baffled the exertions of many skilful men, is no slight indication of an unusual degree of mental capacity. However this be, I would recommend to you to turn the apprehension of the truth of this too common and degrading opinion to a useful purpose. You may learn from it, how becoming and valuable is the possession of general knowledge in all those, who, cultivating with ability a particular art, would ensure the respect as well as the admiration of the world.

If too much, or too exclusively confined to their own peculiar studies, artists lack, of necessity, those sources of congeniality with others, which are commonly regarded as the evidence of superior intellect, and the chief solace of human life; and are often no less conducive to interest than to honour.

It is no light matter, however, which is thus imposed upon artists, and I cannot venture to recommend an abstraction of much time from the necessary labours of your profession; "for art is long, and life is short." But some application each day to the acquirement of literary or of scientific knowledge would agreeably relieve your minds, and would return to your benefit by enlightening and strengthening your understandings. It would qualify you for the society of gen-

tlemen and of scholars, and assist your endeavours to maintain your art in a station becoming its great and real value, by removing the stigma of ignorance in its professors.

Yet, however advantageous your academical or your private studies may be, and necessary as supplying the component parts of the practice of your art, or maintaining your credit for capacity as men; their true value and usefulness depends upon your ingenuity and integrity in applying them.

That taste, as well as knowledge, is progressively refined, none can deny who have made any steady continued practice in painting, or have attentively observed the progress others. Even men who have exhibited its gifts in early life, as did Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. West, and Sir Thomas Lawrence, have obtained by practice an extension and refinement of their taste, and increasing power in the application of it. Pursue, then, your studies with diligence and zeal. Let none despair, because it is not given to them at once to reach the perfection which they see and admire in the works of others. One of the evidences of genius is the perception of beauty when presented to view by superior artists. The knowledge of the cause of it may in time accompany the perception, and the next step in the gradation of taste is the capability to present it.

But it must be confessed, that they are few to whom it is given, deeply to penetrate that portion of the arcana of nature which is the immediate object of an artist; and not even the aspirations of the brightest genius can carry a man to the acme of perfection in painting, without application the most steady, reflective, and persevering.

THE END.

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